

TE AROHA IN THE 1890s

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Abstract: *During the 1890s the town slowly increased in size and became economically stronger despite mining, for most of this decade, no longer flourishing. Other occupations became more important, with farming and tending to the needs of tourists being pre-eminent. Residents continued to grumble over the need for improvements, the cost of housing, high rents, and a poor system of tenure, but the establishment of a borough meant that some more improvements could be provided. As the town developed the poor-quality buildings hastily erected in its early days were seen as disfiguring it, and gradually the streets and footpaths were improved.*

As previously, storms and fires were notable experiences, the latter revealing the need for a water supply and fire fighting equipment. And also as previously, there were many ways to enliven small town life in mostly respectable ways, notably the library, clubs, sports, horse racing, the Volunteers, and entertainments of all kinds, details of which illustrate the texture of social life. Despite disparaging remarks by outsiders, living at Te Aroha need not be as dull as was claimed.

POPULATION

The census taken on 5 April 1891 recorded 615 residents, 307 males and 308 females, in the town district.¹ The electoral roll of June revealed that miners remained the largest group: 19, plus two mine managers. The next largest category was labourers, 19, more than in previous years; none were ex-miners, for three had the same occupation in 1887 and the rest were new to the roll.² Other occupations, and the numbers in each occupation, were the same as in 1887; the only new ones were a flaxmiller, a flaxdresser, a cattle drover, a ploughman, a wheelwright, an architect, an undertaker, and a billiard marker. There were 137 enrolled, nine less than in 1887.³

The electoral rolls of October and November 1893 listed 381 people, 167 men and 114 women. Mining remained the largest occupation, with 12 miners and three mine managers; the other occupations were as in previous

¹ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand taken for the night of the 5th April, 1891* (Wellington, 1892), p. 38.

² *Te Aroha Electoral Roll, June 1891; Tauranga Electoral Roll, August 1887.*

³ *Te Aroha Electoral Roll, June 1891.*

rolls.⁴ An 1893 directory gave the total number of those in employment as 136, including four women. Only seven miners were listed, plus a mining agent. As there were 35 farmers, a stockman, and two dairymen (one a woman), clearly it included the surrounding district.⁵ In February 1894, it was stated that the population was ‘increasing amazingly’.⁶ The census of April 1896 recorded had 672 residents in the town, 57 more than in 1891; there were 331 men and 341 women.⁷ In the electoral roll, published in November, the largest occupation was ‘domestic duties’, a solely female category. The next largest was mining, with 25 listed (27 in the original list, for William McClear⁸ and Henry Brennan Kerr⁹ were listed twice, with Kerr recorded as living at both Te Aroha and Waiorongomai), plus one mine manager and the mining registrar. There were 17 farmers (one a woman), four farm hands, one shepherd, and a veterinary servant; some of the eight ‘settlers’ may have been farmers. The next largest categories were labourers, with 19, and carpenters, at 14: there were no more than six in any other occupations. The number of male and female residents on the roll was 358 (duplicated entries have been omitted from this total).¹⁰

There were 461 people on the electoral rolls published from September to November 1899, a total obtained after removing duplications (William Harry Clarke, Johanna Cook, Robert Harris, Ema Lipsey and William James Wright were all listed twice). Of the male occupations listed, mining was still the largest, with 26 miners, two mine managers, and a mining agent. There were 23 farmers, two farm hands, two farm labourers, and a dairyman, but although these were recorded as living in Te Aroha, most lived outside the township; additional details given by three farmers indicated they lived well outside.¹¹ The next largest group was labourer, 22. The railway provided jobs for two stationmasters, three engine drivers, two

⁴ *Waikato Electoral Rolls, October-November 1893*.

⁵ *Cleave's Auckland City, Suburban, Provincial, Commercial, Municipal and General Directory 1893*, ed. Arthur Cleave (Auckland, 1893), pp. 273-274.

⁶ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 10 February 1894, p. 21.

⁷ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand taken for the night of the 12th April, 1896* (Wellington, 1897), p. 39.

⁸ See paper on Pakeha Bill: William John McClear.

⁹ See Te Aroha Rifles: Nominal Roll to 28 February 1900, Army Department, ARM 41, 1911/66v, ANZ-W; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 March 1897, p. 4.

¹⁰ *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1896*.

¹¹ *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1899, Supplement No. 1*, pp. 2, 3, 15.

firemen, a guard, two 'railway employees', and four platelayers, one a 'casual platelayer'. Male occupations appearing for the first time were sign writer, watchmaker, photographer, and hairdresser.¹² By early 1901 the population of the borough had attained 888.¹³

ECONOMIC PROGRESS

The uncertainty during the early 1890s about Te Aroha's economic prospects cannot be traced easily now, for all copies of the *Te Aroha News* have been lost between 23 July 1890 and 16 January 1895, and the surviving issues for 1890 ignored this issue (local newspapers always preferred to be positive). Other newspapers made only occasional references to the town. In January 1890, the local correspondent for the *Waikato Times* wrote that 'a number of citizens and miners' were leaving for Westport; some former residents who had 'drifted' there reported 'favourably upon wages' and that work was plentiful.¹⁴ Three months later, this correspondent was living at Broken Hill in Australia.¹⁵

With the collapse of the flax industry in 1890 because of low prices, the *Waikato Times* considered the district's prospects to be poor. Unless the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company recommenced work,¹⁶ it was 'feared an exodus will take place'.¹⁷ In May, it reported that the 'times do not appear to be flourishing at Te Aroha, as during the past six weeks there have been four applications from that district for relief' from the Hamilton charitable aid board.¹⁸ The new correspondent for the *Waikato Times* wrote in July that 'the business depression, owing to the temporary cessation of mining operations, has had an evil effect on some of our tradesmen'. Already two had left, another, 'a most enterprising store-keeper', contemplated 'immediate removal', and the editor of the *Te Aroha News* was

¹² *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1899*.

¹³ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand taken for the night of the 31st March, 1901* (Wellington, 1902), p. 28.

¹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 January 1890, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1890, p. 2.

¹⁶ See paper on this company.

¹⁷ *Waikato Times*, 17 April 1890, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Waikato Times*, 8 May 1890, p. 2.

about to leave. But although ‘these defections’ were ‘serious’, when ‘good times’ in mining returned, ‘in a few months the vacancies will be filled up’.¹⁹

During 1891, there were signs of economic recovery. In March, it was reputedly ‘once more on the road to success’, the proof being the number of miners at work and the flax mills once more ‘working day and night’.²⁰ A local option poll in May voted in favour of more hotel licenses,²¹ indicating residents’ faith in the prospects. The following May, the expansion of Alexander Watson Edwards’ drapery shop²² and the erection of a blacksmith’s shop for David McLean Wallace²³ were cited to prove that improvements were ‘on the increase in this rising city of ours’.²⁴ But although there were a large number of visitors during the tourist season, the decision of the Bank of New Zealand’s decision to open its agency only once a fortnight indicated decline.²⁵ In June, one visitor noted ‘the gloom of the place’, for the tourist season was ‘almost over, and there being but few visitors things were naturally very quiet’.²⁶ A Paeroa newspaper agreed that Te Aroha was ‘looking rather dull’, and correctly noted that agriculture was now more important than mining.²⁷

Peter Gilchrist, a lawyer who settled in Te Aroha in 1892,²⁸ with some exaggeration recalled that ‘the value of property was practically nothing and the whole town could probably have been bought for a couple of thousand pounds’; one resident bought a four-roomed house for £8. Typically praising the superior men of the past, he stated that ‘the whole town was in a parlous condition, but it was pulled together by the force of character of the men who lived in those days’.²⁹ By September, several shops were ready to be opened, and a public hall had been erected for Samuel Tozer Smarden,

¹⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 8 July 1890, p. 2.

²⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 14 March 1891, p. 18.

²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 May 1891, p. 2.

²² See paper on his life.

²³ See paper on his life.

²⁴ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 28 May 1892, p. 19.

²⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 April 1892, p. 23.

²⁶ N.E.B., ‘A Holiday Trip’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 June 1892, p. 7.

²⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 25 June 1892, p. 5, 16 July 1892, p. 7.

²⁸ See advertisement, *Waikato Times*, 31 December 1892, p. 3; *Observer*, 21 April 1894, p. 3.

²⁹ Recollections of Peter Gilchrist, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1926, p. 4.

a publican.³⁰ One correspondent noted ‘decided signs of good progress’.³¹ But a visitor described the ‘small township’ as ‘rather dwindling now that not much is being done at the gold mines’.³²

In January 1894 a visitor found the place pleasant but dull. Having with difficulty obtained tickets from a ‘decayed’ shop, he enjoyed his ten minutes in a hot bath. ‘You see I was fresh from town. After a month or two at Te Aroha, I should probably be glad to spend a week in the bath without getting out’. The town was ‘quiet, very quiet. For people who are tired of town bustle and worry, it ought to fit the bill. In fact, there is a restfulness about it that sometimes becomes a trifle oppressive. But there are some nice rambles to be had. Waiorongomai, with its famous gorge, is not far off’. It was ‘a great place for honeymooning. Spooney couples may be met at every turn. The Domain on a fine day is full of them. Excellent and cheap accommodation’.³³

In December it was anticipated that the opening of the railway to Rotorua would ‘take the gilt off Te Aroha’s gingerbread’.³⁴ This appeared to be proven when a special excursion train from Auckland brought only 40 people instead of the expected hundreds. In the opinion of the *Observer*, Te Aroha would have ‘to wake up and shake itself if it would not be cut out altogether by its powerful rival’.³⁵ However, another excursion train late that month brought about 200 people to what the local newspaper insisted was ‘the premier sanatorium of New Zealand’. The swimming baths were particularly popular with these visitors.³⁶ In May, an excursion train brought 1,200; the town board made their one-day stay enjoyable by providing a brass band and tea and refreshments.³⁷ The *Te Aroha News* anxiously waited for the next tourist season.³⁸

³⁰ For Smardon, his hotels, and his hall, see Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 41 no. 259, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1895, p. 2, 10 February 1900, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 July 1898, p. 21; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 831.

³¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 September 1893, p. 23.

³² Robert S. Herries, unpublished diary, entry for 22 September 1893, MSX-4174, Alexander Turnbull Library.

³³ C.A. Wilkins, ‘In Hot Water’, *Observer*, 13 January 1894, p. 19.

³⁴ *Observer*, 22 December 1894, p. 10.

³⁵ *Observer*, 19 January 1895, p. 7.

³⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 30 January 1895, p. 2.

³⁷ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 25 May 1895, p. 21.

³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 31 July 1895, p. 2, 30 November 1895, p. 2.

That the prospects of Te Aroha were seen as unfavourable was implied by a February 1895 report that some residents had won land in a Papamoa Land Association ballot.³⁹ But also in that month, it was reported that ‘a number of new shops have been erected on the main street ... [and] some parts of the street being asphalted gives it a pleasing appearance’.⁴⁰ When townspeople started ‘complaining of bad times, business dull, etc’, the *Te Aroha News* responded that almost all able-bodied men were at work, some forming the railway formation to Paeroa, while mining was looking up, dairying was doing well, and many road works were planned.⁴¹ And the town board was ‘spending a lot of money in trying to beautify the place’.⁴² Like all local newspapers, the *Te Aroha News* boosted its locality, its masthead showing prosperity brought by mining, the sanatorium, and agriculture.⁴³ There were indeed more signs of progress than of decline. ‘A number of new shops’ had been erected on the main street;⁴⁴ there were now three ironmongers’ shops.⁴⁵ In July new buildings were ‘going up in several directions’, there was ‘a healthy inquiry for allotments’, and there was ‘not an unoccupied house’.⁴⁶ In September, a shortage of labourers at both Te Aroha and Paeroa enabled some Waikato men to obtain good jobs there.⁴⁷ Carpenters were kept busy during that month enlarging shops.⁴⁸ Although the Postal Department considered the population was too low to warrant delivering mail,⁴⁹ Saturday night shoppers thronged the main street in October: ‘the tradespeople appeared to be doing good business’.⁵⁰

In March 1896 the 130 accounts in the sub-agency of the Bank of New Zealand produced a profit of about £50 per year. Should it close, its Paeroa

³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1895, p. 3.

⁴⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 February 1895, p. 21.

⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2.

⁴² ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 March 1895, p. 21.

⁴³ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1895, p. 1.

⁴⁴ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 February 1895, p. 21.

⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Waikato Advocate*, 6 July 1895, reprinted in *Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal*, no. 77 (April 2001), pp. 25, 26.

⁴⁷ *Waikato Times*, 12 September 1895, p. 4.

⁴⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 11 September 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Town Board, *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1895, p. 2.

agent considered that no notable accounts would be lost.⁵¹ Head Office heeded the prompt, and in May it was closed.⁵² As another sign of incipient decline, in March the license of the Club Hotel, recently destroyed by fire, was transferred to Huntly.⁵³

There were many signs of increasing benefits from the hot springs, now commonly described as a sanatorium. In January 1896, visitors to it were 'arriving daily', taxing most of the hotels and boardinghouses 'to their utmost capacity'.⁵⁴ Income from the baths during December, January and February was larger than for any previous equivalent period.⁵⁵ In February, with the prospect of two mines being floated in London, 'property and building sites' were showing 'a distinctly upward tendency' in anticipation, and there was 'a great demand for houses'.⁵⁶ By the end of May, people were 'very forcibly reminded of the coming mining boom' by 'the number of pegs intimating that numerous business and residential sections have recently been taken up'.⁵⁷ The mining boom meant the vacant allotments were 'all pegged out' and land between Waiorongomai and Te Aroha was pegged out. 'Last Saturday there was a rush for beds and baths, an unheard of thing at this season of the year'. The domain board would provide 'increased bathing accommodation to keep pace with the times'.⁵⁸

Although cheered by the financial implications of the apparent mining revival, when a miner applied to erect a battery in Boundary Street on the site of the 1881 battery the town board successfully opposed its erection because, being in a public street, it could block the entrance to the pound and saleyards.⁵⁹ Te Aroha wished to gain the benefits of mining but did not want to become a mining town like Thames with batteries close to houses and shops.

⁵¹ Bank of New Zealand, Report by Charles Rhodes, Agent, 31 March 1896, Balance Book of Ohinemuri Branch for Half-Year to 31 March 1896, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

⁵² *Thames Advertiser*, 5 May 1896, p. 2.

⁵³ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 18 January 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 February 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 12 February 1896, p. 6; *Thames Advertiser*, 26 February 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 29 May 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 May 1896, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 86, 97/1896, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A; Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 15 September 1896, p. 6.

In July, the *Te Aroha News* recommended that, as the town was ‘fast becoming’ of ‘growing importance’, it required street names. ‘The greatest confusion often exists even in the minds of some of Te Aroha’s oldest residents as to these names’, and only with ‘the greatest difficulty’ could one street ‘be distinguished from another’.⁶⁰ The ‘great demand for house property’ meant that in August building was underway ‘in real earnest, and carpenters and laborers generally’ were ‘in demand’.⁶¹ The *Te Aroha Times* gave a list of the township’s greatest needs: ‘a water supply, a bank, a daily train service, and house accommodation’.⁶² Many believed it was ‘certain’ to ‘expand within the next year or two to an extent difficult to realize at the present moment’, probably towards Waiorongomai; a tramway was likely to connect the two settlements.⁶³ In October 14 buildings were being erected and others were ‘contemplated’.⁶⁴ A Paeroa builder was ‘ready to put up a row of cottages’ if he could get land.⁶⁵ At the end of the month, no houses were available for holiday accommodation.⁶⁶ The Minister of Mines discovered that the boom meant all available allotments in Lipseytown were being taken up.⁶⁷ A brewery would to spend about £2,000 re-erecting the Family Hotel.⁶⁸

That the housing boom was essentially created by investors rather than settlers was indicated by a a syndicate being formed at Paeroa to take up ‘all unimproved residence sections at Te Aroha held for speculative purposes, in which the building regulations have not been carried out’.⁶⁹ Under the mining regulations, sections pegged out had either to be utilized or forfeited. The *Te Aroha News* noted that ‘we now have the unusual spectacle presented of venerable citizens emerging from their retirement to substantiate, with a persuasive tongue and an unsuspected fund of forensic

⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 6 July 1896, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1896, p.2, 28 August 1896, p. 2.

⁶² *Te Aroha Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 13 August 1896, p. 2.

⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1896, p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1896, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 October 1896, p. 2.

⁶⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 October 1896, p. 2; for exhaustive and laudatory details of every aspect of the new building, see 5 August 1897, p. 3.

⁶⁷ A.J. Cadman to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 November 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/14, Part 1, ANZ-W.

⁶⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 November 1896, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 October 1896, p. 2.

eloquence and legal acumen, their claims to a building site, in open court'.⁷⁰ For outsiders wishing to erect buildings, 'the figures put on the residence sites by speculative holders are prohibitive'. It was pleased the warden intended 'to enforce compliance' with the building clauses of the regulations.⁷¹ At a November hearing, the warden 'refused in many cases to grant residence sites to people who already held various allotments'.⁷²

In January 1897, a Taranaki visitor's 'candid opinion' was published in Paeroa:

"Speaking generally, apart from the hotels, boarding houses, and baths at Te Aroha, the township, as a health resort, is very much behind the times. You are lacking two important requirements, that is, a system of drainage and a water supply, and for the absence of the latter you have no apparent foundation for excuse. Again, you have no banking facilities at Te Aroha, through which I have experienced considerable inconvenience. How local tradespeople and country settlers manage to transact their business without a bank I am at a loss to conceive. In a town like Patea ... which is very little larger than Te Aroha, there are no less than three banks established. It is about time your school was enlarged; how you can put up with the present small building for such a large number of scholars beats me entirely. I hear the Board of Education intend to add to the school buildings sometime before the fall of the year; but you really want the breathing space for the youngsters during the summer months.... There is great jealousy evinced by Te Arohites towards strangers, whom they really ought to welcome with open arms, for it is to strangers (with capital, of course) that your townspeople will have to look for new ideas and new life in business and other enterprises, or they will everlastingly stick in their old groove, which, to my mind, savours of the antediluvian period."⁷³

This hitherto unrecorded jealousy of outsiders does not seem to have been common. An English visitor was kinder, if still sarcastic about some aspects:

I must say Te Aroha is a most lovely spot. The mountain rises 3000 feet sheer out of a sweet pastoral valley, through which runs a stream whose banks are shaded by weeping willows. Pine

⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1896, p. 2.

⁷¹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 29 October 1896, p. 2.

⁷² Warden's Court, *Waikato Argus*, 14 November 1896, p. 2.

⁷³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 January 1897, p. 7.

woods, crags and waterfalls make up a background which delights the heart of the impressionable spinster, and gives the amateur photographer the opportunity of perpetrating very bad pictures. Ascents of Te Aroha, or "The Mountain of Love," are made from the hotel, and guides are furnished at reasonable tariffs. You walk up the well-kept path through pretty woods, and, having inspected the view, cut your name upon an adjacent tree, walk down again, and drink a glass of medicated water. Carefully economical of your time, you may spend three hours in this entrancing pleasure. The rest of your visit, if one may judge by the few days I spent there, should be devoted to learning how to play tennis.

A complaisant omnibus will take you to the gold-mines for the not extravagant sum of threepence – return tickets at reduced rates....

I did not find the hot springs any help to me in my geological efforts to discover how gold is deposited. They do not gush, as all well-behaved springs do in poetry books. They simply oozed, and they smelt abominably of sulphur. So I watched the worst game of tennis I have ever seen, played by commercial travellers in tweed suits.⁷⁴

'Several' buildings were being erected in March 1897,⁷⁵ and six weeks later a columnist detected 'unmistakable evidences at every turn of the increased faith of property holders in the future'.⁷⁶

A correspondent wrote in June that there was 'not a single house to be obtained', and 'holders of vacant allotments ask prohibitive prices when approached by anxious buyers. The strange part of the business is that a favoured few have had several allotments granted to them' whereas 'others have been restricted to one section apiece. The former are evidently keeping their blocks for speculative purposes, which is contrary to the Mining Act'. This 'lop-sided policy' was 'retarding the extension' of the township.⁷⁷ The *Te Aroha News* reported 'great complaints' about 'the absurd prices demanded for sections in the town by residents who merely hold the same with four pegs, a ring fence, and a ridiculous display of building material, consisting often of four posts and two bits of scantling'. It optimistically

⁷⁴ Raymond Radclyffe, *Wealth and Wild Cats: Travels and researches in the gold-fields of Western Australia and New Zealand* (London, 1898), pp. 168-170.

⁷⁵ *Waikato Argus*, 20 March 1897, p. 3.

⁷⁶ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 5 May 1897, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 3 June 1897, p. 2.

hoped they would ‘show a little public spirit’ by allowing intending settlers to obtain land at a reasonable figure.⁷⁸

A columnist interpreted a ‘substantial’ offer for the Family Hotel as a sign ‘outside capitalists’ had ‘firm faith’ in the future.⁷⁹ In August, building was ‘still brisk’, with ‘every indication of a busy season apart from the mining’,⁸⁰ which was fading after the brief boom. The following February, an Auckland journalist who had spent his summer holiday there recommended that ‘to keep pace with the times a good water supply and a thorough system of drainage’ was required. In the domain, as all available funds were ‘required for making and improving the baths’ not very much had been done ‘to make the gardens attractive’, although there was ‘a splendid lawn partly surrounded with weeping willows’. After describing the baths in detail, he returned to the need to ‘bring the gardens into line’:

A good working plan of the grounds should be made on which the different plantations would be shown. Arrangements ought also to be made so as to have a continuous succession of flowers during the season. The residents of Te Aroha must recollect that the well-being of the whole district depends upon the number of visitors. The more attractive the gardens and surroundings are made the greater will be the number of visitors.

After a week of using the baths and drinking the water, a man who had been unable to walk was able to get around on crutches and hoped to burn these after another week. The journalist’s appetite had ‘increased enormously’ through drinking the water.⁸¹

By April 1898, there were three hotels, about 13 shops, and 14 or 15 boarding houses,⁸² most of the latter being very small. A mock-advertisement appeared in a Hamilton newspaper: ‘WANTED - A BANK. For further particulars apply to any of the Te Aroha stores or hotelkeepers’.⁸³ When he visited in that month, the Premier, Richard Seddon, was ‘favourably impressed’ with the domain ‘but pointed out where

⁷⁸ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 17 July 1897, p. 2.

⁷⁹ ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 10 July 1897, p. 3.

⁸⁰ ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 August 1897, p. 3.

⁸¹ ‘Hortus’, ‘Te Aroha’, *Auckland Star*, 12 February 1898, Supplement, p. 3; reprinted in *Te Aroha News*, 17 February 1898, p. 2.

⁸² Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

⁸³ *Waikato Argus*, 13 April 1897, p. 3.

improvements might with advantage be introduced'. He recommended establishing a borough, for 'a walk through Te Aroha had not given him a favourable impression. Opposite the Domain, for instance, there was erected a row of buildings of the lean-to order of architecture'. A borough would be able 'to determine the class and style of building to be erected in the main streets.... With an increased influx of visitors it was necessary to increase the facilities for their proper reception and safe accommodation'.⁸⁴ The *Waikato Argus* considered it a 'go-ahead township', as indicated by its wanting a gas works, which had prompted a visit from the manager of the Hamilton Gas Works.⁸⁵ The town board sought the advice of the company providing gas lighting at Paeroa, and the *Te Aroha News* favoured this form of lighting.⁸⁶ Plans to generate electricity for lighting by using the creek running through the shopping centre were abandoned because of cost.⁸⁷ In August, the *Te Aroha Times* listed its 'chief wants': a bank, water supply, fire brigade, drainage, and new post office.⁸⁸ Four months later, the *Te Aroha News* listed more needs: 'Music, lights, and company; tennis courts, bowling greens, croquet; a specially built steam launch, owned by the Borough for picnickers on our river, and a host of other things'.⁸⁹

The *Te Aroha News* claimed that, because of its 'mild and equable winter climate', the township was 'rapidly becoming known as the New Zealand Bournemouth'.⁹⁰ It referred to the 'bracing salubrity of our mountain resort and its oppressive contrast - Rotorua'.⁹¹ In October the rebuilt Hot Springs Hotel was opened to general admiration. The *Waikato Argus* described it as an 'imposing building' whose 'internal arrangements' were 'as complete and well arranged' as the exterior was 'handsome and striking'. Its drainage, 'quite equal to that of any town hotel', ran straight to the river (that this would cause pollution was ignored). Water taken from the creek alongside provided 'a copious supply of water' for the 'numerous lavatories, bars, and other conveniences', whilst a high-pressure boiler provided hot water for the bathrooms. The 40 bedrooms were 'all large, airy,

⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 12 April 1898, p. 2.

⁸⁵ *Waikato Argus*, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, Town Board, 21 April 1898, p. 2, editorial, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1898, p. 2, 14 May 1898, p. 2.

⁸⁸ *Te Aroha Times*, n.d., cited in *Observer*, 14 August 1897, p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., cited in *Observer*, 24 December 1898, p. 4.

⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1898, p. 2.

⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1898, p. 2.

and tastefully furnished', and 'so arranged that four suites of rooms can be obtained in the best part of the building, if required'. Invalids could use its private entrance to the domain.⁹²

Although the town was losing its mining industry, tourism was booming. A correspondent rejoiced in the number attracted during the Christmas holidays:

The popularity of Te Aroha as a holiday resort was proved beyond all doubt during the recent holidays, a leading factor in this being the opening of the railway line between Te Aroha and Thames. On Monday the Thames Branch of the New Zealand Natives' Association had their excursion to Te Aroha, accompanied by the Fire Brigade, and the result was the largest crowd Te Aroha has ever been visited by. Over 2000 people came up by two excursion trains, and many had to be left behind through lack of sufficient rolling stock on the railway. Needless to say there was a great demand made on the baths, and the Domain Board, recognising the probable rush, had made provision in the way of engaging a complete staff of attendants, and ticket collectors were placed at all the bath-houses. General satisfaction was expressed by the visitors with the natural beauty of the Domain, and the completeness of the arrangements in connection with the baths.... The usual influx of visitors still keeps up, the various hotels and boarding-houses being well filled.

Even the mosquitoes contributed to the visitors' comfort by staying away.⁹³ A 'New Chum' who described the day as 'a most pronounced success' estimated that up to 2,500 arrived on the two trains, to be welcomed by the mayor and mayoress, 'who were kindness itself'. The domain grounds were 'really lovely, and, as there were some 3000 or 4000 persons present, the scene was an animated one. The drinking springs and the baths were patronized on an immense scale, while the Te Aroha band played for the first time in the newly erected pavilion', wrongly sited, he considered, in the centre of the lawn. The new Cadman Bathhouse was 'picturesque and charming', and the bath attendants 'exceedingly civil and attentive, though they had a really trying day'.⁹⁴

The tourist trade held up during that summer. 'Never before' had 'so many visitors from various parts (excursions excepted) been staying here

⁹² *Waikato Argus*, 25 October 1898, p. 2.

⁹³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 January 1899, p. 10.

⁹⁴ 'New Chum', 'A Run to Te Aroha', *Thames Advertiser*, 4 January 1899, p. 1.

and partaking of the baths and drinking the waters'.⁹⁵ Although cheap excursion fares had ended by April, it was hoped to have these reinstated because they were a principal reason for the large number of people visiting.⁹⁶

James Mills, the first mayor,⁹⁷ acted quickly in 1899 to obtain a water supply, and wanted to install electric lighting.⁹⁸ When the Governor visited in May, Mills, exaggerating somewhat, informed him that 20 years previously there were no white men in the district. The domain was 'a mass of fern and tea-tree, so that His Excellency would from that see what had been done, and what improvements had been effected'.⁹⁹ During August, 70,000 feet of timber was delivered for buildings being erected.¹⁰⁰

In 1900 a visitor described Te Aroha as 'smart and well kept'.

The shops are well-stocked, and on a Saturday night have quite a bright appearance, while the street is well filled with strollers, looking cheerful and prosperous. I met one of the business men, and propounded at once this query, "Upon what does Te Aroha live?" For a time he seemed to struggle with his thoughts, and then he answered, "Well, do you know, we people of Te Aroha sometimes quietly discuss that question ourselves, and I don't think we ever have come to a conclusion which satisfies us all." But I believe a true analysis could be made. There is still a little support from gold. Then a strong and healthy and growing aid comes from the progress of settlement and cultivation of the lands in the extensive plain in front of the town. Dairy factories have been started, and every year sees more and more acreage redeemed from the unproductive wilderness. Then lastly, and perhaps the most powerful factor of all, Te Aroha has its hot springs, with the tourist traffic. Visitors come to it from Waikato and the Thames, as well as Auckland, and its position on the railway is a very advantageous one. Te Aroha depends very much for the immediate future on the management of these hot springs. The other sources of prosperity will, I believe, grow to large proportions in the course of time.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 5 April 1899, p. 2.

⁹⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 January 1899, p. 10.

⁹⁷ See paper on his life.

⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1899, p. 2.

⁹⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 May 1899, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1899, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ 'Maratuahu', 'Te Aroha: Past and Present', *New Zealand Herald*, 28 April 1900, Supplement, p. 1.

In contrast, a teacher, Alfred Fordyce Burton,¹⁰² and his wife, upon arriving in 1899

thought it the meanest looking town we had ever seen. There was not a respectable looking shop in the main street. There was not a decent footpath.... In those days the outside borough staff consisted of Bob Michael¹⁰³ and his well-known wheelbarrow.... The boarding houses were all in the main street.... Most were unpainted - in fact there was very little paint in the town and not a shop had a decent front.¹⁰⁴

His recollections were partly confirmed by a complaint about the post office's 'totally inadequate accommodation' and 'generally antiquated appearance'.¹⁰⁵ The *Te Aroha News* was not impressed with the efforts to improve it, considering that 'the most effective way' was 'the improvement of the present building out of existence altogether. Like most mining townships, we have our share of unsightly buildings and shanties', and it wanted an office that looked 'a little less like a glorified barn, and a little more like a public building'. Whilst an added room provided 'some much needed privacy for transaction of registration business', it created 'a rather lop-sided appearance', and the alterations retained the existing 'unsightly porch' and the false front disguised 'what manner of building' was behind.¹⁰⁶

Because so many buildings were of poor quality, the council in 1903 instructed that building plans must be approved by the town clerk because of the custom 'of putting up buildings first and submitting plans afterwards', resulting in 'a number of inferior buildings' that did not comply with the by-laws.¹⁰⁷ The 75th Anniversary Supplement of the *Te Aroha News* claimed that the economic depression meant a good house could be acquired for £5 or £10, a figure that cannot be confirmed. A rate of ninepence in the pound produced, for the first year of the borough council, only £116 15s 10d.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² See *New Zealand Herald*, 6 July 1897, p. 5.

¹⁰³ See paper on the life of Robert Michael.

¹⁰⁴ Recollections of Alfred Fordyce Burton, *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1936, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Thames Star*, 6 May 1899, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 6 May 1899, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 31 July 1903, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1973, 75th Anniversary Supplement, p. 5.

Lack of adequate drainage was a constant concern. For instance, the town clerk in August 1901 sought funding from the government because with the ‘visiting season’ about to be ‘in full swing’, it was ‘advisable that no effort be spared in securing that the excellent reputation enjoyed by Te Aroha for healthfulness shall not be impaired’.¹⁰⁹ By the early twentieth century, a ‘splendid supply of water’ came from a reservoir of 164,500 gallons, and the drainage was being improved annually.¹¹⁰

STREETS

A correspondent referred in February 1890 to ‘our delightful little town of rocks and boulders, dusty roads and prize winds’.¹¹¹ Four years later, the town board showed ‘a very commendable spirit in improving the footpaths in the main streets’. Kauri kerbing was being put down and the paths covered with gravel and sand, a ‘much needed improvement’ aided by the discovery of some ‘very nice fine gravel’ close to town.¹¹² In February 1895, ‘some parts’ of Whitaker Street were asphalted, giving it ‘a pleasing appearance’.¹¹³ ‘Lipsey’s bridge’, over the Tutumangeo Stream in Lipseytown, the northern suburb, was completed in May.¹¹⁴ In July, a Cambridge newspaper reported that the streets and footpaths were ‘receiving careful attention’, a ‘very marked’ improvement on previous years.¹¹⁵ Because a contractor was unable to complete his work in Bridge Street before the weather turned this important thoroughfare into a quagmire, a local poet immortalized the commissioners of the town board:

I had a vision in my sleep

¹⁰⁹ William Hill (Town Clerk) to Superintendent, Tourist and Health Resorts Department, 29 August 1901, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

¹¹⁰ *New Zealand (Ao-Tea-Roa): Its history, commerce, and industrial resources*, compiled by Somerset Playne, J.W. Bond, H.H.F. Stockley, edited by F. Holderness Gale (London, 1912-1913), p. 392; for details of improvements to the drainage in the first few years of the century, see Tourist Department, TO 1/50, 1903/218, ANZ-W.

¹¹¹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 8 February 1890, p. 15.

¹¹² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 June 1894, p. 23.

¹¹³ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 February 1895, p. 21.

¹¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ *Waikato Advocate*, 6 July 1895, reprinted in *Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal*, no. 77 (April 2001), p. 25.

Which might have made a Stoic weep,
 A fearful apparition sent
 Of works half done, and gold misspent.
 It would have terrorised the hearts
 Of our Commissioners, and the smarts
 Of conscience caused them soon to say
 Oh Moses, wherefore thus and why,
 And made the great soul of our H---- [Moses Hotchin]
 Regret the money spent on botching.
 Methought in dire dismay I stood
 Beside a mighty sea
 Of swaying, tossing, treacherous mud,
 Which gaped unceasingly
 Where noble horses fought for life,
 Men shouted in despair,
 Sheep bleated, oxen lowed, and all
 Was wild confusion there,
 And many tried to cross that sea,
 Strong men, and women fair,
 Before my horror-stricken gaze
 They soon had perished there,
 Yet o'er they sank for evermore
 Their voices did combine
 And to a warmer region [Hell] all
 Commissioners did consign,
 And bitter wailing filled the air.
 I could not close mine ears
 And thus it came to pass that I
 Am grey, but not with years.
 And swiftly, swiftly, flowed the mud
 Engulfing great and small
 And from its home in Bridge Street, came
 Right up to Smardon's Hall.
 The people then with one accord
 Fled up the Mount of Love
 To find a place thereon to rest
 Like Noah's ancient dove.
 And higher, higher rose the mud
 Till o'er each land mark tall
 And on Te Aroha's highest crest
 Spread like a funeral pall,
 Then darkness shook her dusky wings
 The sun had hid his face
 And from the sombre canopy
 Flamed out the word - Disgrace.

The remaining 28 lines described the distant future, when a scientist descending from the moon discovered people ‘doomed to walk this muddy sea’ for all eternity.¹¹⁶ Three months later, two ‘enterprising’ shopkeepers were commended for their ‘patriotism’ in re-grading and asphaltting the footpath in front of their shops at their own expense.¹¹⁷ In November, a lamp lighter was appointed to light 16 kerosene lamps in Whitaker Street.¹¹⁸ Later, lamps were placed in other streets, protecting residents from ‘large pine tree roots across the paths, open drains, and large stones which often appeared after a downpour’.¹¹⁹

In January 1897 a visitor described the footpaths as being ‘in an abominable state of roughness, with the exception of certain patches in the main street’, although even there they were ‘falling in alongside the kerbing, making it exceedingly dangerous for the unwary pedestrian after dark’.¹²⁰ The Whitaker Street footpath ‘fitly named “Rough on Corns”’, a play on the poison ‘Rough on Rats’, was finally asphalted in March.¹²¹ The following month, a petition signed by 35 ratepayers asked the town board to ‘open up’ an impassable part of Brick Street which forced those who wanted to build to suffer ‘great inconvenience owing to building material and goods having to be conveying in a round about way’. Although the chairman sympathized, he said the ‘treasury was empty’.¹²² In July it was stated that, apart from the street between the railway station and Whitaker Street, all the streets and footpaths were ‘neglected’ and ‘in many places all but impassable, and certainly a disgrace to a health resort’.¹²³ The following month, the *Te Aroha Times* wanted ‘improved footpaths and streets (out of main thoroughfare) and more light’,¹²⁴ and the town board’s chairman

¹¹⁶ E.M., ‘A Vision’, *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 9 November 1895, p. 2, 23 November 1895, p. 2, 18 December 1895, p. 2; *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley, or Pioneering in the Thames Valley*, ed. F.W. Wild (Te Aroha, 1930), p. xi.

¹¹⁹ Anon. ‘The Old Lamplighters of Te Aroha’, *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1895, p. 10.

¹²⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 January 1897, p. 7.

¹²¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 27 March 1897, p. 2.

¹²² *Thames Advertiser*, 24 May 1897, p. 3.

¹²³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1897, p. 3.

¹²⁴ *Te Aroha Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Observer*, 14 August 1897, p. 4.

stated that ‘great complaints were being made about the manner in which the back streets were being neglected’.¹²⁵

An officer who inspected the Volunteers in 1898 commented, ‘How you fellows managed to get up such a splendid swinging stride on such roads ... puzzles me. I couldn’t do it’.¹²⁶ And there was a new menace on the footpaths: cyclists. In March, the *Te Aroha News* reported complaints ‘from time to time of local riders converting our side-walks into cycling tracks’ despite the by-laws.¹²⁷ Judging by a 1903 letter, the cleanliness of the footpaths was questionable: ‘On Saturday last I went out to do some shopping, two shops I wanted to enter, but could not owing to the disgusting state of the pavement. It would have been like walking through a huge spittoon’.¹²⁸

RENTS AND TENURE

In July 1890, a resident reported ‘great dissatisfaction’ at the ‘very unsatisfactory land tenure’, which retarded progress. ‘Many instances have been brought under my notice where capital would have been forthcoming for building and land purchasing, had we been able to give a good title’, either freehold or perpetual lease. Twenty-one year leases scared off capital, and a better title would give the town ‘a much neater and more substantial appearance’.¹²⁹ The following month, the chairman of the Town Board asked the government to take over the land, which would pay it to do ‘and be the means of greatly advancing this township, bring a better title, and more reasonable rents’.¹³⁰

Dissatisfaction with the Ngati Rahiri landlords changed to alarm when it was rumoured Pakeha speculators sought the freehold of Morgantown, the main portion of the township. ‘Naturally, the leaseholders have become alarmed, as they fear that when their present leases expire, they would not, if the speculators secured the land, be able to obtain the renewals except at

¹²⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1897, p. 3.

¹²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 18 June 1898, p. 2.

¹²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 26 March 1898, p. 2.

¹²⁸ Letter from ‘A Lover of Clean Streets’, *Te Aroha News*, 13 August 1902, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Newspaper Clippings 1895-1905, BACL 11532/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁹ Letter from ‘A Correspondent’, *New Zealand Herald*, 9 July 1890, p. 4.

¹³⁰ Edward Gallagher (Chairman, Te Aroha Town Board) to Minister of Mines, 18 August 1890, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/773, ANZ-W.

heavy increases of their present payments'. Appealed to, the Minister of Native Affairs decided the Crown should purchase an interest to give him a 'potent voice' when the leases ran out; he might even buy all the interests 'in order to save it from the maws of the land sharks'.¹³¹

In May 1892, George Lipsey, spokesman for Ngati Rahiri,¹³² proposed that the rental of business sites should be reduced from £5 to not less than £3, residence sites remaining at £1, and 99 year leases with revaluations every 20 years.¹³³ A month later, he decided that only business sites in the main street, Whitaker Street, should pay £3; those in the side streets should pay less.¹³⁴ About 60 leaseholders and others attended a meeting called in August by the town board: after 'considerable discussion', it was agreed with Lipsey only business sites in Whitaker and Bridge Streets would be at the new rate, the others being at £2, and the length of leases and their revaluation would be as he proposed. These changes would, a correspondent felt, 'give general satisfaction' and result in 'a great deal of building and repairing'. The 'uncertainty' over tenure had 'done a great deal to keep the place back, and to prevent new settlement', but a fair rent and a good term of lease would, 'without doubt, cause a great many of the now vacant allotments to be taken up, built upon, and otherwise improved'.¹³⁵ Clearly tired of all these negotiations, Lipsey wanted the terms 'so fixed that even Parliament could not alter them', which his lawyer warned him was impossible.¹³⁶

Rebuilding shops destroyed by fire in 1892 was postponed by a delay in granting the new leases. The following January, a correspondent described this as 'a serious drawback' to those wishing to rebuild, and hoped the issue would 'soon be settled, so that the unsightly ruins may be covered up by nice new buildings'.¹³⁷ By mid-year the tenure issue had been resolved and

¹³¹ *Wellington Press*, reprinted in *Thames Star*, 22 May 1891, p. 2.

¹³² See paper on his life.

¹³³ James A. Miller to A.J. Cadman, 28 May 1892, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/14, Part 1, ANZ-W.

¹³⁴ James A. Miller to A.J. Cadman, 25 June 1892, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/14, Part 1, ANZ-W.

¹³⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 August 1892, p. 6.

¹³⁶ James A. Miller to A.J. Cadman, 20 August 1892, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/14, Part 1, ANZ-W.

¹³⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 January 1893, p. 23.

rebuilding was well underway.¹³⁸ In mid-1895 a Cambridge newspaper noted that, as rents had been reduced and the tenure was now for 99 years, 'business people have been inspired with greater confidence and take increased interest in their properties, and it an unusual thing now to see an unpainted building'.¹³⁹

There was a brief controversy in February 1898 over the requirement that those carrying on business in their homes must pay rent at the rate for a business site. This met 'with great disfavour, and threatens to develop into something like a revolution', all those at a protest meeting agreeing not to pay, forming an association, and starting a fund to fight a test case if necessary.¹⁴⁰ The *Te Aroha News* warned that the mining registrar intended to carry out a 'vigorous policy' to enforce the payment of the rents, and recommended that people either pay the rent or forfeit their ground.¹⁴¹ As nothing further was heard about this incipient revolution, residents must have taken its advice.

In 1900 a visiting journalist discovered that Te Aroha had a 'serious' grievance because of the 'general muddle between land under the Goldfields Act, native land, and Government ownership'. For business sites in Morgantown an annual rental of £5 was charged, but in Lipseytown it was £3. Residents believed Te Aroha should not be treated as a mining township but 'freed from restrictions'. Holders of residence and business sites had recently petitioned that 'the efforts which have been made to get the consent of the native owners to reduction of the business site rents to £3 be continued and carried to completion'. In addition, in Morgantown, where 'substantial and valuable improvements' had been made or were planned, the warden should be able to grant larger areas than the present residence sites. "Every effort' should be made to purchase the remaining Maori shares, after which Crown titles should be given. The journalist considered these requests were 'reasonable' and 'would be the means of greatly improving the township'.¹⁴² During that year, the government acquired

¹³⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 September 1893, p. 29.

¹³⁹ *Waikato Advocate*, 6 July 1895, reprinted in *Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal*, no. 77 (April 2001), pp. 25-26.

¹⁴⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 8 February 1898, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1898, p. 2.

¹⁴² 'Marutuahu', 'Te Aroha: Past and Present', *New Zealand Herald*, 28 April 1900, Supplement, p. 1.

some of Akuhata Lipsey's interests in Morgantown¹⁴³ and his fellow-owners agreed to reduce business site rents to £3, as in Lipseytown, but would not sell their shares.¹⁴⁴ Residents argued that as Te Aroha had turned into 'a health and residential resort', it needed 'good buildings and well kept gardens and a frequent use of the paint pot' to give visitors a good impression. A better title was needed, because nobody could borrow money on their houses.¹⁴⁵ Complaints about the tenure continued,¹⁴⁶ and in 1914, by which time the entire township had become Crown land, a Royal Commission reported that residence and business site licenses were inappropriate for a non-mining town. Most residents would acquire the fee-simple if offered at a reasonable price, which would create 'a very appreciable improvement in the town'.¹⁴⁷

ANIMALS

In mid-1894, a correspondent wrote with feeling about the proclivities of some local animals:

Cattle here have an unlimited run in the roads and streets, and apparently no restrictions are placed upon them. They have become an intolerable nuisance to the settlers in any of [the] by-streets of the township. No garden is safe, and people have constantly to be upon the watch to prevent their gates being pushed open, and their flowers and trees destroyed, during the nocturnal peregrinations of cows and calves. On dark nights, it is positively dangerous to walk along the footpaths of the side streets, as cattle are lying about, and are almost too lazy to move as a person approaches. In country places it is sometimes a great convenience to settlers to run their cattle on the roads during the day, and by-laws to regulate this are in operation in some districts, but to have cattle running night and day in the streets of a town of the size of Te Aroha, is surely manifesting too generous a spirit altogether.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ See paper on his life.

¹⁴⁴ Mines Department, MD 1, 04/900, ANZ-W.

¹⁴⁵ Edward Kersey Cooper to Minister of Mines, 10 April 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/900, ANZ-W.

¹⁴⁶ For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 21 March 1904, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ 'Hauraki Mining District and Te Aroha Township: Report of Royal Commission...', *AJHR*, 1914, C-3, pp. 1, 6-7.

¹⁴⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 June 1894, p. 23.

Two years later, a member of the town board 'moved that a ranger be appointed with power to impound all stray cattle found on the road. He spoke strongly of the damage which was being done to the footpaths in some of the back streets on account of cattle being allowed to roam at large'. Some members considered 'that if the cattle were kept in at night all practical purposes would be served', and a decision was left to the new board;¹⁴⁹ in the absence of the local press, it is not known whether any effective action was taken. The following year, a pony spent a night in the domain 'fattening itself on the vegetation'.¹⁵⁰ Three months later, the board's chairman reported 'several complaints' about pigs being kept inside the town; he proposed to raise the issue at the next board meeting, but did not.¹⁵¹

BRIDGES

In 1895, after one rider's collarbone was broken when his horse stumbled in crossing the railway bridge, a correspondent wanted its dangerous state brought to the attention of the authorities before a fatal accident occurred:

The railway lines run on the top of the decking of the bridge, which makes it very difficult to drive restive horses over. But, in addition to this, a length of old railway iron has been laid along each side of the bridge, and the rails are bolted down, with the sharp flange of the iron turned up on the inside. Unless drivers are very careful these sharp edges grind on the wheels and frighten the horses, and if anyone is unfortunate enough to be thrown out he is almost certain to be seriously injured.¹⁵²

Two years later, 'many residents in the back sections' complained of 'suffering great inconvenience owing to the footbridge crossing the creek in

¹⁴⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 15 September 1896, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 3 June 1897, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1897, p. 3, 17 September 1897, p. 6.

¹⁵² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 November 1895, p. 23.

upper Kenrick-street not having been replaced since the January flood', and wanted immediate action.¹⁵³

STORMS

Gales struck in 1892 and 1893. A heavy gale in August 1892 damaged several houses, wrecking one completely, and blew down 'fences and outhouses throughout the township in all directions'.¹⁵⁴ In February 1893, 'one cottage with two occupants was blown over twice. No one was hurt'.¹⁵⁵ In July, the half-erected public hall was blown down.¹⁵⁶ During August 1896 a gale tore roofs off houses and stables and blew down fences and chimneys. One woman was blown across a street, all business had to be suspended, and the mail coach to Paeroa was blown over.¹⁵⁷

A heavy gale struck on a Sunday a year later, gusts of over a hundred miles per hour demolishing two flaxmill sheds. 'Very small congregations assembled at most of the churches, and in some cases the preachers were only heard with difficulty, on account of the creaking and groaning of the framework of the buildings'.¹⁵⁸ In June 1898 'several two and three-roomed cottages were blown over, while larger houses had their roofs carried away. Much of the damage to houses was caused through the chimneys being blown down, and falling through the roofs', causing narrow escapes. A draper lost his verandah and several shop windows, and when some sheets of iron were blown off his roof stock worth about £500 was damaged. Other shop verandahs were lost, and the creek that flowed through the shopping centre suddenly flooded:

It broke away completely from the usual channel, and for a time it seemed as though nothing could prevent the destruction of several shops in the front street. Fortunately, a large gang of willing workers, with picks and shovels, were soon collected, and working up to their knees in water, they managed to divert the course of the water, but not before considerable damage was done.

¹⁵³ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 August 1897, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 August 1892, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1893, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Waikato Times*, 6 July 1893, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 July 1893, p. 23.

¹⁵⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 29 August 1896, p. 4; *Auckland Star*, 29 August 1896, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 18 August 1897, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 18 August 1897, p. 2.

A seven-roomed cottage being renovated 'completely disappeared, nothing being left but the floor'. A coach house was totally wrecked, and the Catholic Church was shifted about two feet off its blocks.¹⁵⁹ Subsequently, government aid was sought to timber the sides of the creek.¹⁶⁰

FIRES

At two o'clock in the morning on 8 November 1892, fire broke out, completely destroyed six shops in Whitaker Street and scorching two adjoining premises. 'There being no water supply, the fire could not be checked until it burnt itself out'.¹⁶¹ Only 'the most strenuous exertions of willing helpers, aided by the fortunate circumstances of there being little or no wind blowing', prevented more buildings being lost. As the shops could not be saved, residents tried to save the contents. 'In this the ladies were very conspicuous and deserved the highest praise'. After several hours of effort, most of the contents of three shops were saved, but the other three shopkeepers lost all their stock, at great financial loss even when partly insured.¹⁶² The fire 'aroused public opinion' about a water supply. 'For some years the matter has been discussed, and without doubt would have been settled long ago, but for the opposition of some of the residents. Now all seem to see the necessity of it'. A correspondent was amazed at the lack not only of a water supply but of any fire fighting appliances. 'Not even a bell has been hung to arouse the people'. The 'immediate formation of a hook-and-ladder brigade would be a good thing, and in due time the water supply would follow'.¹⁶³

On 24 January 1896, because there was still no water supply or a fire brigade, the fire that broke out in the Club Hotel at 3.40 in the morning destroyed all ten buildings in the block opposite the domain.¹⁶⁴ As well as the hotel, there was a boardinghouse, a butcher's shop, a draper's, a shoemaker's, a bootmaker's, two fruit shops, a draper's, and a

¹⁵⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 July 1898, Supplement, p. 1; see also photograph of an unroofed house, 9 July 1898, Supplement, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 28 June 1898, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 November 1892, p. 3.

¹⁶² *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1892, p. 2.

¹⁶³ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 November 1892, p. 23.

¹⁶⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 25 January 1896, p. 6; *Thames Advertiser*, 25 January 1896, p. 2.

watchmaker's. When the licensee, Alexander Schultze,¹⁶⁵ was awakened by his wife, he 'rushed upstairs to awaken the boarders, of whom there were fortunately only two, but the fire had too great a hold, and he was driven back by the smoke. Those upstairs got out by the windows, and had a very narrow escape'. One, an invalid, 'was unable to move himself, and was carried out almost at the last minute'. The escape of Hubert Cox was 'miraculous':

Being somewhat deaf his cousin, Mr Langton, a solicitor from Home, and who was sleeping at the same house, had some difficulty in awakening him. When Mr Cox opened the door he was met by a sheet of flame, which burned his hands and face. About this time he began to lose consciousness, and was almost overcome when he reached the window leading to the balcony. He had not the presence of mind to raise the window, but forced himself through the glass, thereby cutting himself very severely, particularly about the arms. When on the balcony he made an effort to reach the verandah post in order to make his descent, but being in a dazed condition he lost his hold and fell a considerable distance to the ground, which has given him a severe shaking.

'A large number of willing workers' soon managed to save furniture and personal effects. As the slight breeze shifted slightly after some time, coupled with an open space, the whole street was not destroyed, but serious financial losses were suffered by boarders, shopkeepers, and the hotel and boarding house owners. Schultze was only able to save his watch and chain along with a cash box, for he and his wife 'had to rush out by the side door in their night-dresses, barely escaping with their lives'. Mrs Schultze, 'being in a delicate state of health', was 'quite prostrated by the shock'.

Altogether this disaster is a great misfortune to the town, as it is more serious than the one which occurred three years ago. Most of the buildings had just been renovated, the occupants anticipating better times, in view of the mining spurt. It may be a

¹⁶⁵ Birth Certificate of Arnold Herbert Schultze, 1 April 1895, 1895/5866, BDM; advertisements, *Wanganui Herald*, 6 April 1874, p. 4, 30 October 1874, p. 1; advertisement, *Taranaki Herald*, 15 January 1879, p. 3; *Manawatu Times*, 11 July 1879, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1885, p. 3, advertisement, 2 May 1885, p. 8, 9 December 1891, p. 4, 9 June 1892, p. 3, advertisement, 10 May 1893, p. 8, 5 June 1894, p. 6, advertisement, 27 October 1894, p. 1, 7 March 1896, p. 5, 1 April 1907, p. 5.

long while before the unsightly gap, caused by the fire, is filled up with new buildings.

The disaster has once again shown the necessity for some organization to check such destruction. With a good natural water supply the apathy of the Town Board and inhabitants generally in that respect seems almost criminal. As matters stand at present, given a good start and a favourable wind, nothing can stop a fire from making a clean sweep of the town.

The draper was particularly unlucky, as he had been refused insurance cover because the company 'considered the block a risky one'.¹⁶⁶ At the subsequent service in the Anglican Church, the minister 'made sympathetic reference, in the prayers and sermon to the sufferers by the recent fire'. During the offertory an Auckland visitor 'contributed, in an impressive manner, the sacred song "Cleansing Fires" '.¹⁶⁷ Later, residents laughed at a businessman who took 'vigorous exception' to people saving his stock, 'urging that the lot was well enough insured, the place was old, and that they had been too officious', but then discovered the policy had lapsed five years previously.¹⁶⁸

The main fire of 1897 was discovered in the kitchen of the Hot Springs Hotel at half-past-three in the morning:

There being no appliances to quell the fire, the building was soon in a blaze.

There was a large number of boarders in the hotel, many of them being ladies; all fortunately escaped.

The hotel was situated at the corner of the Domain Reserve fronting Whitaker and Boundary-streets, and fortunately it was entirely detached. At one time, however, it was feared that [Alexander] Calder's¹⁶⁹ Boarding House would take fire. There was fortunately very little wind at the time. Had this happened all one side of Whitaker-street must have gone.

There was very little property saved from the hotel.¹⁷⁰

In July 1898 the *Te Aroha News* demanded a fire bell.¹⁷¹ Three months later, three shops burned down in circumstances that prompted a police

¹⁶⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 February 1896, p. 15.

¹⁶⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 January 1896, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Observer*, 22 February 1896, p. 11.

¹⁶⁹ See Te Aroha Warden's Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 25 January 1897, p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ *Waikato Argus*, 23 November 1897, p. 2.

investigation and a coroner's enquiry attended by a representative of the insurance companies. The three shopkeepers 'were particularly questioned, in order to have some light thrown on the origin of the fire. Although certain suspicious circumstances were brought out, there was no direct evidence' about it, as the coroner stressed in his summing up. 'He also strongly deprecated' how some witnesses gave evidence. Although the jury could not determine a cause, it was 'strongly of opinion' that the evidence of all three shopkeepers was 'exceedingly unsatisfactory'.¹⁷²

When a borough was established in 1898, after much argument over cost a water supply was authorized which was forecast to be 'quite a boon in case of fire, etc'.¹⁷³ In mid-1899 a fire bell tower was erected.¹⁷⁴ Before its completion, a fire totally destroyed a four-roomed cottage, a sick woman being awoken just in time to escape with her baby. 'By this time the neighbors had gathered together, but were unable to save the furniture, everything practically being destroyed'.¹⁷⁵

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A meeting of residents in July 1893 discussed establishing a borough because they believed the township was receiving little aid from the county council for its streets. Discussion was adjourned for a 'more general gathering of the inhabitants',¹⁷⁶ which may have been held, but no newspaper published outside Te Aroha mentioned it and no local newspaper for that year has survived. In 1895, when the *Te Aroha News* for almost the entire year survives, the issue was not raised. Interest in local politics revived in September 1896, when 'great interest' was manifested in the town board election, seven men standing for the five places.¹⁷⁷ Of the 137 electors, either 100 or 109 exercised their vote,¹⁷⁸ and the outcome was, to one correspondent, 'on the whole, a good one'. A baker (later a publican),

¹⁷¹ *Te Aroha News*, 19 July 1898, p. 2.

¹⁷² *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 November 1898, p. 28.

¹⁷³ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 17 December 1898, p. 22.

¹⁷⁴ *Thames Star*, 16 June 1899, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ *Thames Star*, 21 June 1899, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 July 1893, p. 23.

¹⁷⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 September 1896, p. 23.

¹⁷⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 September 1896, p. 23; *Thames Advertiser*, 19 September 1896, p. 2.

Samuel Leonard Bygrave,¹⁷⁹ a mine manager, Thomas Gavin,¹⁸⁰ a publican, William Henry Knock,¹⁸¹ a small farmer, Robert Mackie,¹⁸² and a coach proprietor, Edward Gallagher,¹⁸³ were elected, while the poundkeeper, John William Richard Guilding,¹⁸⁴ and a carpenter, James Mills, were not.¹⁸⁵

In 1897, complaints about the streets and footpaths prompted a correspondent, in retailing a town board debate about funding repairs, to explain the background of the commissioners' views:

Com. Gavin was of opinion that a 1s rate should be struck to provide ways and means for carrying out necessary works in a proper manner.- Com. Knock strongly supported this view.- Com. E. Gallagher contended that a sixpenny rate would be quite enough as it would provide £108 15s. He would give notice of motion to that effect. The roads he said were in excellent order notwithstanding letters in the newspapers to the contrary.¹⁸⁶

For the benefit of those who are not in the "know you know," I will endeavour to throw a little light on Com. Gallagher's contention. In the first place that gentleman in his own august person comprises the "Works Committee." He is also a coach proprietor who runs his vehicles chiefly between the railway station and the upper end of Whitaker-street, where he has a second establishment. It is scarcely necessary to say that the roads traversed by the said gentleman's coaches are in excellent order, for the very good reason they receive constant attention at the hands of the "Works Committee." Unfortunately the ratepayers who live anywhere out of the main thoroughfare have just cause to complain of neglected roads and footpaths, in many places all but impassable and certainly a disgrace to a health resort like Te Aroha. Of the five members of the Board three live on the main street [Knock, Gallagher, and Bygrave], while the other two live a short distance off the Te Aroha - Waiorongomai Road, so there is actually no one on the Board to represent the long-suffering ratepayers in the "back blocks." Of course when elected each member is supposed to represent the whole town,

¹⁷⁹ See advertisements, *New Zealand Herald*, 12 November 1904, p. 8, 4 February 1916, p. 12; advertisement, *Waikato Argus*, 10 August 1907, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ See paper on his life.

¹⁸¹ See section on publicans in paper on the drink problem in the Te Aroha district.

¹⁸² See paper on his life.

¹⁸³ See paper on his life.

¹⁸⁴ See paper on his life.

¹⁸⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 September 1896, p. 23.

¹⁸⁶ Letters lost to history with the destruction of the local newspapers.

and they may do so for a time, but somehow their ideas gradually become narrowed down to the contemplation of matters “mighty adjacent” to their own boundary fences.... I quite agree with Commissioners Gavin and Knock re the absolute necessity for a 1s rate. It is useless for the Board to try and administer the affairs of the town with an empty treasury, and it certainly does not seem fair that they should have to obtain an overdraft to enable them to carry out urgent works.¹⁸⁷

When the board asked the government how much money it could borrow for a water supply, it was told it ‘could not borrow more than £600 and then only £300 at a time for two years’. If a larger area was formed into a borough ‘the difficulty would be overcome, as their borrowing powers would be so much greater’.¹⁸⁸ In September, after admitting that it could not afford to put in drains to stop sewage from one section flowing over three others, it agreed to a ratepayers’ petition to call a meeting to discuss forming a borough, the chairman commenting that ‘the requirements of the town exceeded their present revenue’.¹⁸⁹ The meeting agreed a borough was needed so that sufficient could be borrowed to provide water and drainage, and because the government’s subsidy on rates would be doubled. Gavin thought that because of insufficient rateable property it should include Waiorongomai.¹⁹⁰ A petition to the government was sent in November; coincidentally, a revaluation in early 1898 revealed that the township was £36 above the amount required for a borough.¹⁹¹ When Seddon visited in April, he agreed a borough was the only way to raise money to improve the township,¹⁹² and at the end of that month a borough, excluding Waiorongomai, was gazetted.¹⁹³

Three days before the elections of 5 July, the *Te Aroha News* urged ‘the utmost care’ when voting for councillors. They had to build up what all hoped would ‘become a town of importance by reason of its exceptional endowments’, namely ‘those peculiar gifts nature in her beauty has so freely

¹⁸⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1897, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 May 1897, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ Te Aroha Town Board, *New Zealand Herald*, 17 September 1897, p. 6; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 September 1897, p. 36.

¹⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 September 1897, p. 3.

¹⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1898, p. 2, 17 February 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 12 April 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹³ *Waikato Argus*, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

lavished upon us and which so conspicuously qualify Te Aroha to become one of the leading sanatoria in the colonies'. It recommended that Gavin be elected mayor and that ratepayers should vote for

men animated by a high sense of public duty; men who are the least likely to allow their private feelings to colour the discharge of their municipal duties or warp their judgment in civic concerns. Men of the larger mental growth who can be relied upon to take broad views on all questions sprung on their attention by the varying exigencies of a municipality having not only local, but cosmopolitan interests to serve.

Its greatest fear was of 'the council chamber of the young borough being turned into a cock-pit, or parading ground for private animosities'.¹⁹⁴ On the day of the election of councillors, it published a letter from 'A Female Elector' claiming that various 'tickets' were being run, 'certain candidates' standing to oppose the new mayor, James Mills, elected four days previously, which was 'so contemptible' that those concerned should 'be ashamed of themselves'. The editor believed she had 'overstated the case', and expressed 'every confidence' that electors would, 'irrespective of ticket', elect the best men.¹⁹⁵

The result was 'something in the nature of a clean sweep', for only two members of the previous board, Gallagher and Bygrave, were elected,¹⁹⁶ but only one other member, Knock, had stood. The newcomers were, in order of popularity, Alexander Watson Edwards,¹⁹⁷ a draper and son-in-law of George Lipsey, David McLean Wallace,¹⁹⁸ a blacksmith, Samuel Luther Hirst,¹⁹⁹ agent for the Northern Steam Ship Company, and Patrick O'Meagher,²⁰⁰ a hotelkeeper. 'Little excitement' was displayed during polling. 'Towards evening the streets presented a more animated appearance than usual; but on the whole proceedings were of a tame description as befits a borough with such a reputation for the orderliness of

¹⁹⁴ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Letter from 'A Female Elector', with editorial comment, *Te Aroha News*, 9 July 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 July 1898, p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ See paper on his life.

¹⁹⁸ See paper on his life.

¹⁹⁹ See paper on religion in the Te Aroha district.

²⁰⁰ See section on publicans in chapter on drink.

its crowd'.²⁰¹ In his valedictory remarks, the board's chairman reminded councillors that 'there had frequently been heated discussions but he was pleased to say their differences had never been carried outside'. He hoped the council would be 'similarly undivided, and that they would press forward the best interests of the place. He believed the Government would accede to their claims, and they would have to make these claims if Te Aroha was to keep its place as a foremost inland town and the leading sanatorium of the colony'.²⁰²

At their first meeting, Mills urged councillors to work in harmony.²⁰³ Harmony would be lacking, both within the council and outside it, a correspondent writing two months later than there was 'very little spoken of here just now but the elections', with 'plenty of mud-throwing going on. Our popular clerk has not escaped - very unjustly, too'.²⁰⁴ He was referring to the successful effort by some councillors to dismiss the town clerk, appointed in 1893, whose appointment had been confirmed a month before being forced out.²⁰⁵ Conflict persisted in subsequent years, but will not be traced; as an example, in mid-1899 there was 'a warm time at the Council' with 'more to follow'.²⁰⁶ Frederick William Wild, who grew up in the township and was a policeman before becoming town clerk,²⁰⁷ recalled 'some stormy meetings' when Mills was mayor.²⁰⁸ However one of Wallace's sons said that according to his father 'there were no long arguments like they had today and after each meeting the chairman used to take the members to the hotel for supper'.²⁰⁹ He may have been referring to another mayor, for Mills only held the position from 1898-1899 and 1902-1903.

NEWSPAPERS

²⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1898, p. 2.

²⁰² Town Board, *Te Aroha News*, 9 July 1898, p. 2.

²⁰³ Borough Council, *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1898, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 30 September 1898, p. 21.

²⁰⁵ *Waikato Times*, 7 December 1893, p. 6; *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 3, 2 June 1898, p. 3, 28 June 1898, p. 2, 16 July 1898, p. 2; Percy Snewin to Mayor and Councillors, 14 July 1898, Te Aroha Borough Council, 1898 Correspondence File, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²⁰⁶ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 8 July 1899, p. 22.

²⁰⁷ See *New Zealand Herald*, 9 May 1942, p. 8.

²⁰⁸ Recollections of Frederick William Wild, *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1933, p. 4.

²⁰⁹ Recollections of Arthur David Wallace, *Te Aroha News*, 26 October 1927, p. 5.

In July 1890, a correspondent reported that John Ilott, ‘the exceedingly popular editor of the News’, was about to join the *New Zealand Times* in Wellington, and although the editorship had been ‘offered to several of the local talents’, none had accepted it.²¹⁰ As the departure of his family was ‘much regretted’, a largely attended farewell was held at the Wesleyan Chapel.²¹¹ James Scott Ingram, who had been editor of the *Thames Star* for the past four years and was highly commended by that paper, took over the newspaper with a partner, G. Arnold Ward of Tauranga, and became its new editor.²¹² Announcing the change of ownership, the *Te Aroha News* expressed its gratitude for the support it had received: its three rival newspapers in the 1880s had all collapsed.²¹³ The *Waikato Times* correspondent wrote that the new editor’s ‘courteous disposition’ was ‘already apparent’, a change that gave ‘unqualified satisfaction to the great majority’ of settlers ‘who were long ago disgusted with the carping querulous tone of the paper in the past’.²¹⁴ Ingram left *Te Aroha* after three years, being replaced by Charles Frederick Spooner. The new owner, William Shepherd Allen of ‘Annandale’, near Morrinsville, had ambitions to be a member of parliament, having been one in England for 21 years.²¹⁵ Spooner became the proprietor of the *Auckland Mining Standard* in January 1897, and left *Te Aroha* in March.²¹⁶

The *Ohinemuri Gazette*’s owner, Edwin Edwards,²¹⁷ was so impressed with the prospects of *Te Aroha* in 1896 that with another man he founded the *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Advocate*.²¹⁸ First published on 4

²¹⁰ *Te Aroha* Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 8 July 1890, p. 2.

²¹¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 12 July 1890, p. 4; ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 August 1890, p. 18.

²¹² *Thames Star*, 19 July 1890, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 19 July 1890, p. 2; *Te Aroha Electoral Roll*, June 1891, p. 16.

²¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 19 July 1890, p. 2.

²¹⁴ *Te Aroha* Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 August 1890, p. 3.

²¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 October 1893, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2. p. 788.

²¹⁶ *Waikato Argus*, 12 January 1897, p. 2, 23 March 1897, p. 2.

²¹⁷ See Edwin Edwards to Minister of Mines, 11 June 1888, Mines Department, MD 1, 88/471, ANZ-W; Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 64 no. 453, ANZ-A; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 844; *Observer*, 27 July 1895, p. 20, 20 February 1897, p. 3, 5 June 1909, p. 5; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 28 February 1898, p. 2, 16 May 1900, p. 2, 18 July 1900, p. 2.

²¹⁸ G.H. Scholefield, *Newspapers in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1958), p. 114.

July as a weekly, it was intending to be a daily should mining boom as anticipated.²¹⁹ It lasted until September 1898, when the *Observer* Man observed that ‘one of our busters has gone bung. Sign of the “times” ’.²²⁰ Its manager and editor,²²¹ Henry Foulke Gotz, a remittance man who received £17 per month from his father,²²² at the end of the year claimed that ‘he had, during his career as a journalist, worried the opposition paper so much that ... they had to buy him out’.²²³ Gotz gave a very different version to the official assignee after being forced into bankruptcy in September. He held a fifth interest, and during his two years as editor ‘received no salary, and during my whole term of partnership never participated in any profits as the business did not show any’. The partners managed to sell the business for £255.²²⁴ This left the *Te Aroha News* without a rival once more. William Herries, M.P., told a Volunteers’ banquet that ‘it teems with information, if you only know where to find it’, prompting ‘Hear, hear, and paroxysms’.²²⁵

In 1897, ‘several inquisitive Te Arohaitees’ started ‘walking into one of the local printing establishments when so inclined’ and picking up ‘copy’, reading it aloud, and commenting thereon, ‘to the great annoyance of the “comps” ’. In self-defense, a notice at the entrance signed by the Printer’s Devil invited the public ‘to walk right in without ceremony, and talk and laugh as loud as possible’, read any copy for free, and so on in the same vein.²²⁶ Presumably this unsubtle hint worked, for no further mention was made of this issue.

PUBLIC HALLS

²¹⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 13 June 1896, p. 4; *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Gazette*, 4 July 1896, p. 4.

²²⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 10 September 1898, p. 22.

²²¹ *Waikato Argus*, 22 January 1898, p. 2.

²²² Henry Foulke Gotz, Statement to Official Assignee, 23 February 1899, Bankruptcy Files, 98/65, BBAE 5628/8, ANZ-A; ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 14 May 1898, p. 21.

²²³ *Waihi Chronicle*, n.d. [3 December 1898?], W. Wallnutt Scrapbook, p. 7, 84/173, 923N, Waihi Museum.

²²⁴ Henry Foulke Gotz, Statement to Official Assignee, 23 February 1899, Bankruptcy Files, 98/65, BBAE 5628/8, ANZ-A; see also *Thames Advertiser*, 25 February 1899, p. 4, 20 June 1899, p. 2.

²²⁵ *Observer*, 1 July 1899, p. 9.

²²⁶ ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 July 1897, p. 2.

The public hall continued to be the focal point for most social activities, and, on occasions, some anti-social behaviour as well.²²⁷ The *Observer* Man referred to a minor example of the latter: 'Who were the young men that were enjoying the refreshing weed [tobacco] in the back seats of the hall on Saturday night'.²²⁸ In May 1891 it was reported that the Public Hall and Reading Room Company was to sell its property,²²⁹ presumably for financial reasons. A new hall, known as the Town Hall, was erected in 1893.²³⁰ Samuel Tozer Smardon took over the old hall,²³¹ in January 1895 making some new seats and 'otherwise improving it'.²³² The floor was made better for dancing and the dressing rooms were done up.²³³ But in the early twentieth century residents complained 'of the smallness and "un-up-to-datedness" of the Town Hall and often wished it 'would be burnt down so that a new building would be erected'. When a doctor removed a burning torch from underneath it in 1909, 'a very much longed for accident' was 'averted'.²³⁴

THE LIBRARY

When 'a very successful concert, comedy and dance' was held in mid-1890 to raise funds for the library, a correspondent 'was very pleased to see a full house, showing that the people recognise and appreciate the benefits' of having a library. The evening raised 'about £10 clear of expenses', to be spent mainly on new books.²³⁵ In late 1893, when concerts were held for its building fund, a correspondent hoped that during the summer the domain board would 'put up a waiting-room in the Domain in which the library books may be kept. The leading newspapers could be obtained for it, and one of the caretakers has the charge of the books. This would be a great

²²⁷ See paper on larrikinism in the Te Aroha district.

²²⁸ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 22 November 1890, p. 17.

²²⁹ *Waikato Times*, 23 May 1891, p. 2.

²³⁰ *Waikato Times*, 6 July 1893, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 November 1893, p. 22.

²³¹ *Te Aroha News*, 13 March 1894, p. 2.

²³² *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2.

²³³ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2, 9 October 1895, p. 2.

²³⁴ *Burrator Weekly News*, 18 May 1912, printed in Ted Axford, *A Childhood in Te Aroha*, (Wellington, 1992), p. 29.

²³⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 2 July 1890, p. 4.

boon to the visitors, and add very much to the attractiveness of the Domain'.²³⁶ In mid-1894 tenders were received to erect new domain board offices and a library reading room.²³⁷ By August 1895 the library's lending branch had about 50 subscribers.²³⁸ The domain board permitted it to open on Sundays.²³⁹ Residents were allowed to borrow one book at a time whilst those living outside the township could borrow two.²⁴⁰ In October, new books were needed, all the popular ones having been read and re-read: the *Te Aroha News* suggested holding dances and entertainments to raise the necessary funds.²⁴¹ As a temporary solution, the domain board hired 100 books from Auckland for a year.²⁴²

The building was used for more than housing books: during 1895 the playing of draughts was 'all the rage'.²⁴³ When those using the reading room for its intended purpose complained about the noise made by those playing euchre in the same room, the *Te Aroha News* suggested another room should be renovated for use by euchre players and those who indulged 'in the noxious weed'.²⁴⁴ And 'Visitor' complained of worse noise created by a lack of supervision:

Your Library in the Park is one you should be proud of, but I have experienced on several Saturdays and Sundays instead of it being a place of quiet retreat it is a seat of larrikinism and noise. Troops of children over-run the Reading Room, turning over the books, many too young to read but to look at the pictures. I have seen the pages of some books deliberately torn and the bindings injured, on week-days after school I have seen mobs of children troop in which greasy hands from their lunch, and you can imagine the effect upon the books they handle. On Sunday last there were some young men evidently illiterate and half drunk who could not read, they asked questions from the children, the language they used was vile. I think that the police should watch

²³⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 October 1893, p. 22.

²³⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 2 May 1894, p. 6.

²³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1895, p. 2.

²³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1895, p. 2.

²⁴⁰ Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 11 September 1895, p. 2.

²⁴¹ For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 October 1893, p. 22; editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 2 October 1895, p. 2.

²⁴² Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1895, p. 2.

²⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 28 September 1895, p. 2.

²⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1895, p. 2.

for these larrikins. Ladies had to retire. I would suggest the cases containing the books be always locked, no books be left on the tables, and if any resident or visitor wishes to read a book let him have it upon signing for it, but not to be taken out of the Park. That children of tender years be not allowed into the Reading Room, and that silence be enforced therein, notices being placed about the room requesting persons not to disturb others' reading. Also for the police for some few Saturdays and Sundays and afterwards to visit and arrest any person using obscene language such as I have heard; the presence of a policeman would keep order.²⁴⁵

For lighter reading, the Te Aroha Magazine Club was 'well patronised' in 1895.²⁴⁶ It was known as the Te Aroha Book Club three years later, when the *Te Aroha News* suggested it needed a reading room.²⁴⁷

IMPROVING ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG MEN

A Mutual Improvement Society held meetings every Wednesday during 1891.²⁴⁸ Details of one of these meetings was published in August:

At the last meeting of the Te Aroha Mutual Improvement Society, impromptu addresses were given, the speakers drawing their subjects by lot, and the manner in which they treated the various topics was very amusing, as well as instructive. One of the questions was whether the Te Aroha Town Board was of any use to the place, and the speaker was of opinion that while it was undoubtedly of some little use, it was capable of great improvement. Another gentleman who had to state what were the greatest wants of Te Aroha, said that among the most prominent was a new Town Board! A lady member, to whom was given the question as to whether she thought the local newspaper was a faithful organ of public opinion in Te Aroha, said it was not, and that it also (like the Town Board) was capable of improvement in that respect. Another member had to give his idea of what constitutes a model husband, and did so very concisely and to the point by saying that he was one who stayed at home in the evening, smoked his pipe, and got up in the morning to light the fire for his wife! It is to be hoped that when he takes to himself a wife, he will carry out this programme faithfully. Other addresses

²⁴⁵ Letter from 'Visitor', *Te Aroha News*, 13 March 1895, p. 2.

²⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1895, p. 2.

²⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1898, p. 2.

²⁴⁸ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 21 November 1891, p. 17.

were delivered, but the foregoing were the most prominent. Next Wednesday evening there is to be a debate as to whether the world is round or flat.²⁴⁹

Later that month, it was reported that ‘a great many more have joined the Mutual Improvement Society because of hearing Walter sing’.²⁵⁰ But in the following May, when the young men were planning to establish a Young Men’s Club, the *Observer* Man asked: ‘What has become of the Mutual Improvement Society?’²⁵¹ Clearly it, like so many such bodies, had had a short life.

‘All the young men’ were attending meetings of the Bible Class in mid-1891, causing the *Observer* Man to wonder whether they thought the world was coming to an end.²⁵² The following month a club for young men had a ‘good number’ of members.²⁵³ Two months later, the Young Men’s Christian Association, seemingly the same club, was ‘on a very solid footing’ and ‘greatly appreciated by our young gents’.²⁵⁴ The following month the ‘second free and easy concert in connection with the Y.M.C. was a great success’.²⁵⁵

In May 1894, the Young Men’s Club’s annual meeting ‘was well attended by members and intending members’. Its committee included some of the most respectable residents, the president being the Anglican minister.

In the past the club has done excellent work amongst the young men in the district, a large number having availed themselves of its advantages. The object of the club is to provide innocent enjoyment for young men during the long winter nights. There is a reading room where the leading papers can be seen, a games room in which chess, draughts, dominoes, cards, etc, can be played, a room for boxing and single-sticks, and a small gymnasium with Roman rings, trapeze, etc. Free and easy concerts are held monthly during the winter, which have been much enjoyed. It is hoped that this year tea and coffee may be provided at a nominal cost. Unfortunately last winter the building in which the club was held was taken for a boarding-

²⁴⁹ ‘Things in General’, *Thames Star*, 17 August 1891, p. 4.

²⁵⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 29 August 1891, p. 18.

²⁵¹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 21 May 1892, p. 20.

²⁵² ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 25 July 1891, p. 17.

²⁵³ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 15 August 1891, p. 17.

²⁵⁴ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 23 July 1892, p. 20.

²⁵⁵ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 20 August 1892, p. 19.

house, and the committee were unable to secure another suitable building, but now a centrally situated house has been engaged, and the club will be in full swing in the course of two or three weeks.

In addition to the Young Men's Club, and quite distinct from it, there is a Working Men's Club here, which provides a very pleasant reading room, with papers, periodicals, etc, for its members. This is also in a highly satisfactory condition, and is very much appreciated by the many who make use of it.²⁵⁶

Soon afterwards, the Young Men's Club 're-opened' with a dinner 'in the rooms' that provided 'about forty' with 'one of the best spreads ever seen in Te Aroha'. Afterwards, a concert was held in the reading room and its leaders gave their views on its future. 'Amongst other things it was decided to inaugurate a Union Parliament on the lines of the one in Auckland'. The president was appointed Governor, and a vice-president would form a ministry; its first meeting would allot seats and decide government policy. 'This addition to the club should make it much more attractive and useful, and it may prepare some of our young men for active interest in real politics a little later on'. New members were added to the committee, and instructors appointed for the gymnasium. 'The club has now had an enthusiastic start, and under the control of the committee should go on splendidly and be a credit to the district'.²⁵⁷ At the first meeting of the parliament it was hoped 'other prominent citizens might join the Union, so that good debates upon important political subjects might be enjoyed'.²⁵⁸ In July, the monthly meeting attracted 'a number of the committee and members', who decided to double the monthly subscription to a shilling and to hold monthly entertainments 'which would serve the double purpose of providing amusement for the members and assisting the funds'. A sub-committee was appointed to arrange programmes, and it was recommended that a piano be obtained. A correspondent considered it was 'doing an excellent work in providing shelter and recreation for the young men during the winter months'.²⁵⁹ Two months later, 'owing to insufficient support' the

²⁵⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 May 1894, p. 22.

²⁵⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 June 1894, p. 22.

²⁵⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 June 1894, p. 22.

²⁵⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1894, p. 6.

committee decided, ‘much against their will, to close the Young Men’s Club’.²⁶⁰

It is not known how long the Working Men’s Club survived, but for younger males a Boys’ Guild was active by 1897, when in May its members ‘assisted by “our girls,” gave an entertainment’ in the public hall ‘in aid of the funds for the new Reading Room and Gymnasium which it is proposed to build and devoted to the exclusive use of “our boys.” A grand procession opened the proceedings, the juveniles performing a series of intricate movements very creditably’. Then followed solo songs, two tableaux, the St Mark’s choirboys ‘(in character)’ singing a Negro spiritual, and two small dramas. At its conclusion the local Anglican clergyman, Edgar James McFarland,²⁶¹ ‘briefly addressed the meeting on behalf of the boys and their new club room. The National Anthem was sung and the audience dispersed’.²⁶² The reading room and gymnasium does not appear to have been constructed.

In January 1898, it was proposed to re-establish a Young Men’s Society because ‘during the evening there seems to be nothing much to do, and nowhere in particular to go’. It would need, the *Te Aroha News* believed, a gymnasium and a debating society.²⁶³ Late in that month, there was a ‘fair attendance’ at a meeting chaired by McFarland to form what was now called the Literary and Recreation Society. It was agreed that a gymnasium, debates, and lectures would be organized and an entrance fee of 2s 6d charged. Everyone over the age of 15 was eligible to join, but had to be ‘proposed and ballotted for’,²⁶⁴ presumably to keep out the riff-raff. McFarland was chairman of the society, and the two vice-chairmen were Dr Gilbert Smith²⁶⁵ and another Anglican minister, Joseph Campbell.²⁶⁶ ‘Ladies wishing to become members’ paid 1s entrance and 6d per month’.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁰ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 September 1894, p. 10.

²⁶¹ See *Auckland Star*, 28 December 1944, p. 6; *New Zealand Herald*, 29 December 1944, p. 6.

²⁶² ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 May 1897, p. 3.

²⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, 29 January 1898, p. 3.

²⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 1 February 1898, p. 2.

²⁶⁵ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 11 September 1897, p. 4, 3 December 1920, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 22 November 1897, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, advertisement, 11 October 1898, p. 1, 19 April 1923, p. 9.

²⁶⁶ See paper on Joseph Campbell and his thermo-hyperphoric process.

²⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 3 February 1898, p. 2.

Rooms for meetings were obtained at the back of the Town Hall.²⁶⁸ In June, an entertainment was held to raise funds, with music during the first half of the programme and in the second half 'a farcical comedy supported by local amateurs'.²⁶⁹ 'Well known names' performed both in the concert and a 'diverting' comedy, 'Chiselling'.²⁷⁰ Although the actors in latter were 'a trifle nervous', it was repeated by popular demand.²⁷¹ As by 1900 this club was no longer mentioned in the local newspaper, it must have closed before then.

RELAXATION FOR ADULTS

Several clubs and societies provided respectable relaxation. In 1899, 'progressive euchre parties' were 'all the rage'.²⁷² Late that year, the mayor assisted in establishing another Masonic society, the Foresters' Court, most of whose officials were shopkeepers, and a meeting of chess players decided to revive a club;²⁷³ the earlier one had lapsed because it lacked premises.²⁷⁴ The mayor was chairman of the new club, the headmaster was both secretary and treasurer, and the committee included a clergyman and a doctor. Members decided to allow the club free use of their boards and men and fixed the subscription at one shilling. The domain board was asked for a room in their office building for the Saturday night meetings.²⁷⁵ The following month, it challenged the Hamilton club to a match.²⁷⁶

SHOWS

In March 1894, the forthcoming Horticultural Show, the first to be held at Te Aroha, 'gave promise of great success':

The promoters of it are leaving no stone unturned to make it both interesting and successful. The list of prizes for various exhibits

²⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 17 March 1898, p. 2.

²⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 2 June 1898, p. 2.

²⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1898, p. 2.

²⁷¹ *Te Aroha News*, 18 June 1898, p. 2.

²⁷² 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 13 May 1899, p. 22.

²⁷³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 September 1899, p. 23.

²⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1898, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 September 1899, p. 23.

²⁷⁶ *Waikato Argus*, 31 October 1899, p. 2.

has been issued in very neat booklet form, and if anything like a good proportion of exhibits are sent in, it will be a show worth seeing. A promenade concert and fruit banquet will conclude the affair. A show of this kind should do so much to encourage the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, etc, for which much of the soil about here is well adapted.²⁷⁷

It was very successful, baby and beauty contests held during the promenade concert in the evening creating 'great amusement'.²⁷⁸ For the next annual show, most office holders and committee members were farmers; of the five judges, one was a government dairy inspector and the others came from Hamilton, Auckland, Paeroa, and Thames. The weather 'was all that could be desired', and 'great taste' was shown in displaying the exhibits in the hall, 'which presented quite a bright and attractive appearance'. There was a jumping competition at the pound. During the evening, some people 'assisted towards the enjoyment of the show in the way of singing solos, etc, and were listened to attentively and warmly applauded. The Band also played several selections during the evening which were highly appreciated'. Prizes were awarded for pot plants, cut flowers, fruit (grapes, dessert and culinary apples, peaches, quinces, plums, and water, rock, and pie melons, 14 varieties of vegetables, field produce (barley, mangolds, swede turnips, field and white carrots, sugar beet, and yellow and black maize), cookery, dairy products (including eggs and chaff), wine, collections of grasses, 'fancy work', bronze turkeys, ducks, bantams, and calves.²⁷⁹

The Horticultural Society organized a flower show for November.²⁸⁰ This 'annual spring show of flowers, art, and industrial productions' reportedly 'surpassed the most sanguine expectations of the committee. Favoured with a beautiful day, the country folks turned out in large numbers, giving Te Aroha quite a gala day appearance, and adding materially to the financial success'.²⁸¹ To encourage children 'in works of art and collection of objects of interest', in addition to displays of flowers and pot plants there was 'an art and industrial class' open to all schoolchildren

²⁷⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 March 1894, p. 10.

²⁷⁸ *Observer*, 14 April 1894, p. 21.

²⁷⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 9 March 1895, p. 2.

²⁸⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1895, p. 2.

²⁸¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 November 1895, p. 6.

up to the age of 16 and judged by 'a strong committee of ladies'.²⁸² 'The entries of flowers were not numerous, several classes not being competed in at all, but the flowers that were shown were excellent specimens of their kind, thus proving the suitability of soil and climate to produce the most delicate blooms'. During the evening the band 'enlivened the proceedings with several selections which were much appreciated'. The *Te Aroha News* praised the committee for a successful show, which the public attended in 'large numbers, the hall being crowded until 10 o'clock in the evening', and hoped it would be 'the forerunner of many similar exhibitions'.²⁸³

In March 1896, the annual meeting of the Te Aroha Horticultural and Agricultural Society decided to 'develop into something of the nature of a Farmers' Club'. At the first meeting of the transformed society two months later, a vice-president, William Herbert Herries, a future cabinet minister in the Massey government,²⁸⁴ gave the inaugural lecture, on land tenure. After describing the various systems used since Saxon times, he concluded that terms in New Zealand were 'as near perfection as it was possible to get'. After 'an informal discussion' and 'a cordial vote of thanks', members agreed to hold monthly meetings, the next four to hear papers on the cultivation of sugar beet, food adulteration, leasehold systems, and dairying.²⁸⁵

Although the next show was preceded by a gale and floods which so damaged gardens and orchards that it was feared the produce would be poor, everyone admitted that 'the show was equal, and in some respects superior, to those of previous years. The exhibits in vegetables and field produce were particularly good, also the fruit and plants', and 'the display of fancy work was most extensive'. Herries, now a member of parliament, in opening the show commented that 'it was often urged that Te Aroha had nothing but its baths and its mines, but this display showed that they had the land and the right men to work it'. He considered the show to be superior to the Hamilton one. The classes of produce, animals, cookery, and arts and crafts were considerably expanded, and included children's penmanship, essays, art works, and collections. At a dinner for the judges and journalists, speeches urged 'the public to show freely, and to show their

²⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1895, p. 2; *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 November 1895, p. 6.

²⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1895, p. 2.

²⁸⁴ See R.S. Herries, *Memoir of Sir William Herries*, KCMG (London, 1925).

²⁸⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 May 1896, p. 34.

best products. Settlers should not be deterred from exhibiting for fear of failure. If they failed once or twice that should only be an incentive to them to try again, and persevere till they had gained a prize'. There was a 'phenomenally large' attendance at a promenade concert in the evening.²⁸⁶ This annual show would continue to be an important part of the Te Aroha farming and social calendar.²⁸⁷

VOLUNTEERS

In 1892, moves were made to form a volunteer corps for the men of Te Aroha, Waiorongomai, Waihou, and district.²⁸⁸ 'A number of young men in the district' had expressed willingness to join, and a deputation interviewed the visiting Premier in June 'to find out what inducement the Government will hold out'.²⁸⁹ Seddon approved of its formation.²⁹⁰ At the beginning of July, 'notwithstanding the heavy rain, about 30' attended the inaugural meeting in the reading room of the Young Men's Club. Francis Pavitt was voted to the chair: a civil engineer, he had been a member of the Christchurch Engineer Volunteers from 1864 to 1875 and had attained the rank of captain.²⁹¹ After explaining that they had to agree on the name of their corps and to elect officers, Pavitt 'gave some very valuable hints upon successful volunteering, and showed how the new company might be made a great help to the individual members, and to the district at large'. The name chosen was 'Te Aroha Rifle Volunteers'; Pavitt was elected captain, John Archibald Cochrane, a coachbuilder and, later, a farmer,²⁹² was first lieutenant, and James Gordon, a miner,²⁹³ second lieutenant. 'The meeting was most enthusiastic, and the volunteer movement seems to have made a

²⁸⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 May 1897, p. 3.

²⁸⁷ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 17 February 1898, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 21 May 1892, p. 5.

²⁸⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 June 1892, p. 29.

²⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1892, p. 3.

²⁹¹ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 825.

²⁹² See *New Zealand Herald*, 28 April 1893, p. 6, 10 August 1926, p. 6; *New Zealand Gazette*, 12 August 1897, p. 1481; *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1896*, p. 10; *Waikato Argus*, 1 April 1908, p. 2.

²⁹³ See paper on his life.

favourable impression upon the people in the district. About 66 men have signified their willingness to become members'.²⁹⁴

Three months later, 33 men were sworn in; more would have attended but for the very short notice.²⁹⁵ Later that month, Adjutant Grant, when visiting, 'put the company through a number of movements. He afterwards expressed himself as being well pleased with their rapid progress in their drill'. Forty-five had been sworn in, and 'about 20 more' intended to join.²⁹⁶ By November, they were 'beginning to go through the manual exercise with promptitude and precision' and appeared to have 'the makings of a smart corps'.²⁹⁷ Usually meeting in the public hall, when this was unavailable in December they mustered in the domain, watched by a 'large number of residents'. They received rifles in that month.²⁹⁸ One month later it was reported that the volunteers were 'making rapid strides with their squad and company drill. The targets have at last arrived, and are being placed in position as rapidly as possible, and I expect to hear the crack of their rifles at no distant date'.²⁹⁹

The corps became another focus of social life, for instance a crowded concert and dance held in June 1893.³⁰⁰ In the summer of 1896, as in other years, the week's camp included a church parade and the 'annual course of instruction in volley and independent firing'. At its conclusion, 'the tents were struck, and a public social held in the Town Hall'.³⁰¹

Our Volunteers enjoyed themselves immensely during their camping out. They entertained fifty or sixty ladies at tea on Sunday. The sweet creatures appeared to enjoy the picnic and consequent flirtation. Our gallant defenders are bursting with the knowledge of their responsibility. Their chests are still rather flat, but their shoulders are well rounded. The Volunteer social was a pronounced success. The dresses worn by the ladies were very becoming.³⁰²

²⁹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 July 1892, p. 27.

²⁹⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 October 1892, p. 23.

²⁹⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 22.

²⁹⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 November 1892, p. 23.

²⁹⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 December 1892, p. 23.

²⁹⁹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 21 January 1893, p. 20.

³⁰⁰ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 19 June 1893, p. 21.

³⁰¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 7 February 1896, p. 6.

³⁰² 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 22 February 1896, p. 21.

In 1898, residents could 'rest assured' that Te Aroha would 'never be invaded by the Russians. One glimpse of the martial bearing of our gallant captain and his noble followers would suffice to scare away the Russian or any other army'.³⁰³ The following year, 'Faces and Forms at the Te Aroha Volunteer Banquet' were sketched for the *Observer*.³⁰⁴

The Queen's Birthday was celebrated in 1894 with a *feu de joie*, or ceremonial salute of guns, in the domain, followed by a sham fight.³⁰⁵ They participated in activities elsewhere; for instance, a March 1894 cartoon of the annual camp included 'Te Aroha's "Tan Shoe" Rep' and 'Te Aroha's Gallant Officer'.³⁰⁶ Six weeks later, a team competed in a shooting contest at Thames where the Thames Naval Brigade 'did their best to make the visit as enjoyable as possible' and hoped there would be an annual match. Although defeated, the Te Aroha corps was not 'ashamed of being beaten by one of the best teams in the colony, on their own range, and in a stiff breeze'.³⁰⁷ This match did become an annual event. In May 1897 they dined at a hotel whose large dining room was 'quite a picture with an elaborate display of bunting, while the tables, loaded with good things, were set off with handsome appurtenances, and the *tout ensemble* could not therefore be considered otherwise than highly artistic'. There were exchanges of toasts and speechifying, interspersed with songs and two selections from the band.³⁰⁸ Later that month, details were given of the latest parades:

At the volunteer church parade held on Sunday, 23rd inst, there was a very good muster.... The Te Aroha brass band played the company from the Domain to St Mark's Church, where their chaplain (Rev. E. J. McFarland) delivered a most impressive sermon. At the conclusion of the service the company were marched back to the Domain and photographed....

The weather was beautifully fine on the 24th inst, the Queen's Birthday. The Te Aroha Rifles mustered strongly in the Domain Reserve at 9.30 a.m. and fired a royal salute. The band immediately afterwards played the National Anthem, which was followed by three ringing cheers for Her Majesty.... Headed by

³⁰³ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 4 June 1898, p. 21.

³⁰⁴ Cartoons, *Observer*, 24 June 1899, p. 17.

³⁰⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 June 1894, p. 22.

³⁰⁶ Cartoons, *Observer*, 31 March 1894, p. 10.

³⁰⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 11 May 1894, p. 6.

³⁰⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 May 1897, pp. 2-3.

the local band the volunteers then marched through the township and on to the rifle range, where arrangements had been made for the Howden medal and ladies' trophies shooting competitions,

about which much detail was reported. 'Great attention was paid' to this competition, 'especially by the ladies interested in the distribution of the trophies', and one woman provided 'a first class lunch' in her refreshment booth. Prizes and trophies were distributed in the evening, 'after which a social and dance, tendered by the volunteers, was held'.³⁰⁹

Ladies having won trophies at the shooting competition the previous day were admitted free, and each member of the Company was privileged to take a lady friend.... Before dancing commenced the trophies were distributed, the fair recipients receiving their prizes at the hands of their male comrades in arms.

About 60 couples danced, and 'songs were contributed at intervals, and a lengthy recitation was given by the Secretary in his usual forcible manner. Refreshments were provided by the ladies and greatly appreciated'.³¹⁰

Another example of public interest in the volunteers was deplored. At a 'very successful moonlight parade' before inspecting officers 'some of the bystanders present made themselves conspicuous by issuing orders themselves while the men were on the march, causing great annoyance to the officers in charge'.³¹¹

HORSE RACING

The Te Aroha Junior Racing Club, formed at an unknown, in November 1893 held well-attended sports and races on the old Ruakaka racecourse. There was a hurdle race, a high jump, the Maiden Plate, the Cup Handicap, a Forced Handicap, a race for donkeys, and foot races for men.³¹² By 1895 the annual race meeting was so popular that a special

³⁰⁹ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 27 May 1897, p. 3.

³¹⁰ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 28 May 1897, p. 3.

³¹¹ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 August 1897, p. 3.

³¹² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 November 1893, p. 22.

train brought people from Paeroa.³¹³ When a Hack Sports meeting attracted 200 people on a Saturday afternoon in mid-December, most shops closed for the occasion. As well as five horse races and a foot race, the band 'rendered sweet music which enlivened the proceedings greatly'.³¹⁴ In the following February, the Te Aroha Hack Sports Committee's third meeting a 'good attendance' watched a pony race, hurdles, a trot, a Maiden Plate, a Champion Handicap, a Consolation Stakes, and a foot race.³¹⁵

It had become traditional for the Jockey Club's annual races to end with a concert and dance. The one held in March 1896 was 'packed to the door with a large audience, who thoroughly appreciated the splendid programme'.³¹⁶ On the following Easter Monday the Te Aroha Hack Sports again had music provided by the band.³¹⁷ In January 1898, the *Te Aroha News* publicized the March race meeting:

The Te Aroha Jockey Club meeting is generally regarded in Auckland and throughout the Upper Thames as one of the most enjoyable little meetings of the season. This year the committee are to be congratulated on finding themselves in a position to offer increased inducements to owners to enter the best their stables can produce for the rich stakes to be picked up on the breezy little course at Te Aroha West.... We are glad to hear also that the committee have completed arrangements for the erection of a grand stand with seating accommodation for five hundred people. We remember last year well and the good day we had across the river. We were not carriage people in those days, but paid our eighteen hard-earned pennies like a sportsman for the right, which proved to be of an intermittent order, to stand on a plank supported on a couple of cronk [unsound]³¹⁸ gin cases and see the fun. The Tattenham corner³¹⁹ of the course, too, where Perangi Potai and Merry Maid came to grief last year, has been drained and has set handsomely, leaving a capital bit of galloping ground. Altogether we believe the meeting promises to be the best on record, and the only question we would like to ask of the

³¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 9 March 1895, p. 2.

³¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1895, p. 2, 18 December 1895, p. 2.

³¹⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 February 1896, p. 6.

³¹⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 March 1896, p. 23.

³¹⁷ *Waikato Argus*, 22 April 1897, p. 3.

³¹⁸ Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8 ed., ed. Paul Beale (London, 1984), p. 271.

³¹⁹ Named after the famous Tattenham Corner on the Epsom racecourse: see Partridge, p. 1207.

energetic committee is what about the harmony and are our Brass Banders to turn out this year?³²⁰

The stewards did arrange for the band to play and for a special train from Paeroa; they also permitted other games to be played on the course, for a fee of ten shillings.³²¹ A *Te Aroha News* reporter mentioned that the 50 acres within the track was 'in turnips, whose delicately hued-tops present a pleasing relief to the eye, and afford a striking contrast to the ragged tea-tree scrub of last year'. The grandstand, erected for several hundred pounds, was 'on a slight eminence commanding a sweeping view of country, as well as the entire course'. Francis Pavitt, the architect,³²² was congratulated on having 'studied the economy of space and provided for every want' in its design. Although only 50 feet by 20, it contained 'every convenience': luncheon, stewards', 'ladies' retiring', and weighing rooms were all 'finished and furnished in a style reflecting credit on all concerned'. The saddling paddock, over an acre, presented 'a compact and comfortable appearance' and had good facilities for horses and jockeys. And it was 'the most charmingly situated little course in the peninsula'.³²³

SPORT

William Pember Reeves, the Minister of Education, in speaking at a concert held by the Young Men's Club in 1891, recommended they 'go in for all manly out-door games and sport which their leisure time would permit'.³²⁴ In 1898, 'Clodhopper' wanted residents to 'join hands and energy to build one large hall' for the use of all the sporting clubs as well as the Volunteers and the Mutual Improvement, Gymnastic, and Agricultural Societies. 'It should be near the Pound and on the river bank if possible, so that swimming, boating, marching, agriculturalism, and all other pursuits that tend to make men of mark and muscle, nerve and power, such as our common country may some day need'. New Zealand needed 'manly men. Men at once courteous, enduring, especially when combined with cultivation of flowers, fruit and corn, and the patience to debate the affairs of mankind

³²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1898, p. 2.

³²¹ *Te Aroha News*, 3 March 1898, p. 2.

³²² See *Star*, 23 December 1909, p. 1.

³²³ *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1898, p. 2.

³²⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 October 1891, p. 23.

and fit to stand with the few of our race, who shall some day be called to face the world in arms'.³²⁵ This hall was not erected, no doubt for financial reasons.

Sporting rivalry was not the sole cause for the 'great excitement' over two foot races in the domain in 1892. 'A large number of persons witnessed the races, and a considerable sum of money - between £50 and £60 - changed hands'; one young man was 'said to have lost £28'.³²⁶ This was a private affair; gambling was not encouraged at official contests.

The river was used for organized recreation. In September 1892, four-oared boat races were held between two gigs, the second such event creating 'a great deal of interest', with 'quite a number of persons gathered about the railway bridge and on the river banks to witness the finish' of a race of one and a half miles, upstream.³²⁷ Shortly afterwards, when these gigs were sold to a Ngaruawahia man, a correspondent wanted them replaced because 'our young men' were taking 'a good deal of interest in boat-racing'.³²⁸ Five months later, there was a 'good attendance and considerable enthusiasm' at a meeting held to establish a boating club, and a committee was formed to discover how many young men were likely to join.³²⁹ The response must have been disappointing, for it was not formed until October 1895, when it bought two gigs and planned to hold races during summer.³³⁰ Any held went unreported in surviving newspapers, and in 1898 'Clodhopper' referred to the club having 'boats rotting for want of using'.³³¹

Frederick Marychurch Strange, a local farmer,³³² recalled that, 'after racing, football was the most prominent sport. Clubs were formed at Te Aroha, Waihou and Morrinsville, and some keen competition took place, often for a turkey dinner. The losing side paid'.³³³ These matches were social as well as sporting events; for instance, after being defeated at Morrinsville in 1894, the Te Aroha team was 'right royally entertained'.³³⁴

³²⁵ Letter from 'Clodhopper', *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1898, p. 2.

³²⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1892, p. 6.

³²⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 September 1892, p. 23.

³²⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 October 1892, p. 23.

³²⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 February 1893, p. 23.

³³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1895, p. 2, 12 October 1895, p. 2.

³³¹ Letter from 'Clodhopper', *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1898, p. 2.

³³² See *Te Aroha News*, 3 February 1953, p. 4.

³³³ Recollections of Frederick Marychurch Strange, *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1948, p. 2.

³³⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 September 1894, p. 10.

After winning at Morrinsville the following year, they were entertained until late, having 'to wait for the moon to rise, so as to make a safe trip home' at three in the morning.³³⁵

The opening match of the 1894 season was played on the old Ruakaka racecourse 'by the newly-formed local team against the Karangahake juniors. There was some excellent play on both sides, but the home team managed to score 14 points to the visitors' 3'.³³⁶ By August, the 'Te Aroha boys' were leading for the 'junior caps'.³³⁷ The survival of the *Te Aroha News* for most of 1895 and the first seven months of 1898 means much more can be discovered about matches held then. One in the former year was between 'the co-operatives and the Townies',³³⁸ the former being men making the railway formation to Paeroa. The Civilians also challenged the Volunteers to a friendly game.³³⁹ There were regular football matches between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai schoolboys,³⁴⁰ and a friendly match in May between 'the Te Aroha schoolboys (proper) and Waiorongomai schoolboys (past and present)'.³⁴¹ In that year Te Aroha played for the first time against neighbouring townships under the auspices of the Ohinemuri Rugby Union.³⁴² 'Our boys' were 'the best junior team under the O.R.U.', enthused the *Te Aroha News*.³⁴³ 'A large number of intending players were enrolled' at the annual meeting in 1896,³⁴⁴ and a 'match of more than usual interest' was played in the following year between Civilians and Volunteers.³⁴⁵

In 1898, the football club wanted to convert the recreation reserve into a football ground, but, as it was leased as a cattle run, Lipsey's paddock

³³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 17 July 1895, p. 2.

³³⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 June 1894, p. 22.

³³⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 August 1894, p. 22.

³³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1895, p. 2.

³³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1895, p. 2.

³⁴⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 27 July 1895, p. 2.

³⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 June 1895, p. 2.

³⁴² *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1895, p. 2, 15 June 1895, p. 2, 26 June 1895, p. 2, 3 July 1895, p. 2, 10 July 1895, p. 2, 7 August 1895, p. 2, 28 August 1895, p. 2, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 18 September 1895, p. 2.

³⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1895, p. 2.

³⁴⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 31 March 1896, p. 5.

³⁴⁵ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1897, p. 3.

continued to be used.³⁴⁶ A match in June between Volunteers and civilians was notable for frequent challenges to the referee's decisions, 'one player going so far as to serenade off the field because he could not get his own way'.³⁴⁷ 'Some very rough playing on both sides' occurred during a match between the Town Boys' Football Club and the Te Aroha Schoolboys.³⁴⁸ There were matches between City and Suburbs, between married and single, and with adjoining townships.³⁴⁹ One against the Thames School of Mines was played in rain and a 'regular Te Aroha gale'.³⁵⁰ Apart from the above report about the game between boys' teams and 'Clodhopper's' reference to 'rough and tumble',³⁵¹ there was nothing to suggest that games were played in anything other than a sportsmanlike manner. However, in 1909, a game between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai was notable because of the absence of rough play; it had been 'manly and clean, the old style of kicking a man when down instead of the ball being totally absent'.³⁵²

Women as well as men supported the team: in mid-1900, 'the ladies of Te Aroha' presented the Te Aroha Senior Football Club with 'a handsome banner' at a well-attended social in their honour organized by a committee of 11 unmarried women. The banner was 'of blue and white silk (the colours of the club)' and bore 'the following lettering, tastefully worked in silk:- "Te Aroha Football Club, 1900. Haere Tonu ["Keep Going Forward"], Te Aroha."'. After the speeches 'the evening was spent in dancing'.³⁵³ Women watched the games, as for instance in 1894 when the footballers were 'always on the leather' and 'slowly improving. They seem to play A1 when the fair sex are present'.³⁵⁴ When Paeroa played Te Aroha in 1897, 'the visiting contingent had evidently brought their very best barrackers with them including a number of the fair sex, for their encouraging cries completely drowned those of the Te Aroha supporters'.³⁵⁵ A 'football social' held in July that year

³⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

³⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 7 June 1898, p. 2.

³⁴⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1898, p. 3.

³⁴⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1898, p. 2, 16 June 1898, p. 3, 5 July 1898, p. 2, 16 July 1898, p. 3, 23 July 1898, p. 2.

³⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 21 June 1898, p. 2.

³⁵¹ Letter from 'Clodhopper', *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1898, p. 2.

³⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 11 May 1909, p. 3.

³⁵³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 23 July 1900, p. 7.

³⁵⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 1 September 1894, p. 21.

³⁵⁵ 'Twinker', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 27 May 1897, p. 3.

attracted ‘upwards of forty couples’; several songs were ‘nicely rendered’, one, ‘On the Ball’, being ‘sung with great gusto by the footballers’.³⁵⁶ Two years later, the *Observer* Man recorded ‘excitement’ at a match: ‘Who was the irate female who stalked forth into the field brandishing a gingham and screaming “Oh, you brutes!” every time Te Aroha scored? It made me positively “ill” to see the danger she ran into. Oh, for a kodak! [camera]’.³⁵⁷

Cricket was sometimes played with ‘scratch’ teams, as in a match in Lipsey’s paddock in March 1894 between married and single men.³⁵⁸ On New Year’s Day in 1895, when Morrinsville played Te Aroha,

the short notice of the match, and several good hands belonging to the local team being absent, placed the Te Aroha men at a disadvantage, and Morrinsville once more came off victorious. A good deal more practice together is required by our local team before they can hope to regain their lost laurels.³⁵⁹

A month later, the cricket club was ‘mentioned amongst relics of the past’.³⁶⁰ However a team continued to exist, in November the cricketers being described as ‘very slow this season’.³⁶¹ In September 1897, the Te Aroha Boys’ Club agreed to form a cricket club, and the following year two teams of adult cricketers played.³⁶² In the 1898 season, matches were played against Paeroa, Thames, Te Aroha West, Taupiri, Waitekauri, Morrinsville and the Thames School of Mines.³⁶³ In 1899, by combining the Te Aroha, Waihou, and Morrinsville clubs the Piako Cricket Club was formed.³⁶⁴ As with other sports, the social side of these games was important. After a match against Waihou, ‘the usual cheers were called for,

³⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1897, p. 2.

³⁵⁷ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 8 July 1899, p. 22.

³⁵⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 March 1894, p. 22.

³⁵⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 January 1895, p. 9.

³⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1895, p. 2.

³⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

³⁶² *Thames Advertiser*, 19 September 1897, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 3 February 1898, p. 2.

³⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1898, p. 2, 11 January 1898, p. 2, 25 January 1898, p. 2, 1 March 1898, p. 2, 10 March 1898, p. 2, 14 April 1898, p. 2, 19 April 1898, p. 2, 26 April 1898, p. 3, 10 May 1898, p. 2.

³⁶⁴ *Waikato Argus*, 19 September 1899, p. 2.

special mention being made of the agreeable manner in which they were looked after by the ladies'.³⁶⁵

Tennis was played in the domain court; for example, in 1892 there were 'some exciting contests between visitors and local wielders of the racket'.³⁶⁶ In January 1898, a large crowd watched a match against Paeroa.³⁶⁷ A return match between the two clubs was held the following month.³⁶⁸ One month later, a tennis tournament in which both sexes participated was held.³⁶⁹ Tennis matches and tournaments continued to be played, and by 1900 there were calls for a new court.³⁷⁰

By 1897, golf had become 'quite the rage', and the Te Aroha Thermal Springs Golf Club quickly gained 'quite a number of members', with 'several ladies' considering joining.³⁷¹ James Brown, a former Thames miner now farming at Ruakaka,³⁷² agreed to a nine-hole course being formed on his paddocks.³⁷³

In April 1897, an initial lack of public support meant cancellation of the Easter Monday sports day, to the regret of a correspondent who considered such events were needed to attract visitors.³⁷⁴ Subsequently some athletes did organize sports followed by a 'select dance'.³⁷⁵ Before a football match in August a handicap running race created 'great interest'.³⁷⁶ In November, Volunteer Sports were held.³⁷⁷ The following year saw the holding of a Grand Sports Carnival on the Queen's Birthday holiday.³⁷⁸ In late 1899, 'owing to a lack of interest on the part of members, and the

³⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1900, p. 2.

³⁶⁶ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 16 January 1892, p. 18.

³⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 18 January 1898, p. 2.

³⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 19 February 1898, p. 2.

³⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1898, p. 2.

³⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1900, p. 2, 20 January 1900, p. 2, 1 February 1900, p. 2.

³⁷¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 June 1897, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 August 1897, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 18 September 1897, p. 2.

³⁷² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 September 1894, p. 23; *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1909, p. 2.

³⁷³ *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Advocate*, 3 November 1897, p. 2.

³⁷⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 8 April 1897, p. 2.

³⁷⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 13 April 1897, p. 3.

³⁷⁶ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 August 1897, p. 3.

³⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1898, p. 2.

³⁷⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 2 April 1898, p. 2.

removal from the district of some of the more prominent workers', it was decided to disband the recently-formed Amateur Athletic and Cycling Club.³⁷⁹ In 1902 some young men established a gymnastics club.³⁸⁰

Other physical activities did not involve teams. In 1890, 'the rising generation' held boxing matches.³⁸¹ The Palace Hotel advertised its billiard table as the 'Best table in the Town'.³⁸² In 1898, the proprietor of the Family Hotel arranged a handicap quoit match, the stake being a 'Brace of Fowls'.³⁸³ One man remembered much shooting of game.³⁸⁴ In August 1892, a butcher reportedly said 'he doesn't want to make money; he would rather shoot hen pheasants'.³⁸⁵ Te Aroha was 'getting quite a sporting place, the coming events being horse-racing, foot-racing, pigeon and sparrow matches'.³⁸⁶ In November 1895, trout were first seen near the bridge, but none were caught.³⁸⁷

RINKING

The skating rink in the public hall opened for the 1890 season on Easter Monday. After two hours of skating to music provided by the band, dancing started at 9.30: 'Gentleman and (*one*) Lady, 1s; Ladies *each*, 6d'.³⁸⁸ The rink was 'well patronised by those who are desirous of making spectacles of themselves'.³⁸⁹ In September it was 'not looking very brisk at present', despite the efforts of Pietro Faes, a tailor,³⁹⁰ prominent in

³⁷⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1899, p. 23.

³⁸⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1902, p. 32.

³⁸¹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 6 September 1890, p. 17.

³⁸² Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1895, p. 2.

³⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 24 May 1898, p. 2.

³⁸⁴ Recollections of Frederick Marychurch Strange, *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1948, p. 2.

³⁸⁵ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 13 August 1892, p. 19.

³⁸⁶ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 20 August 1892, p. 19; see also *Te Aroha News*, 31 March 1898, p. 2.

³⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1895, p. 2.

³⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1890, p. 2.

³⁸⁹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 8 February 1890, p. 15.

³⁹⁰ See *Thames Star*, 7 August 1882, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 9 June 1883, p. 1, 26 October 1889, p. 7; *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1892, p. 2.

organising these and other social events since the 1880s,³⁹¹ to make it a success. A change of management was rumoured.³⁹² In November, Alfred Everett, an engineer,³⁹³ did recommence rinking (and dancing) once more.³⁹⁴ The following August, both were 'always well patronised', and continued throughout the decade during the colder months.³⁹⁵ When Everett left the district in 1895, Faes ran the rink once more, holding 'popular' skating and dancing carnivals fortnightly.³⁹⁶

ENJOYING THE OUTDOORS

For those who preferred a restful excursion into the outdoors, picnics were popular. In 1895, 'numerous picnics were held in and about Te Aroha on Boxing Day'. The United Christian Endeavour Society, a Protestant movement,³⁹⁷ boated upriver to picnic on the riverbank. 'A large picnic was held in Stanley's paddock; the brass band was present and contributed to the enjoyment of the merrymakers. The various picturesque gullies and ravines were well patronised by smaller picnic parties'.³⁹⁸ A New Year's Day picnic had become a tradition, the band being one of the attractions.³⁹⁹ Occasionally, special picnics were arranged, as in 1898 when the Te Aroha West and District Creamery Picnic was held on a local farm by cream suppliers; Te Aroha residents and visitors were invited.⁴⁰⁰ The *Te Aroha News* hoped this 'most successful picnic' would be the first of many:

Everything conspired to make the event most enjoyable, and the result has been most satisfactory to the promoters to whom thanks are due, especially to the ladies who catered so genially, not only by the suppliers themselves, but also by the large

³⁹¹ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 25 June 1887, p. 3, 23 July 1887, p. 2, 26 November 1887, p. 2.

³⁹² 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 6 September 1890, p. 17.

³⁹³ See *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1896*, p. 18; *Auckland Star*, 10 January 1935, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 22 January 1935, p. 12.

³⁹⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 8 November 1890, p. 17.

³⁹⁵ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 15 August 1891, p. 17, 5 May 1894, p. 17, 18 May 1895, p. 21.

³⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 11 May 1895, p. 2, 19 June 1895, p. 2, 3 August 1895, p. 2.

³⁹⁷ See *Te Aroha News*, 2 March 1895, p. 2.

³⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 29 December 1895, p. 2.

³⁹⁹ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 1 February 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 31 March 1898, p. 2.

number of townspeople, who greatly appreciated the kindly welcome they received. We have expressed the hope that this picnic may be the inauguration of an annual gathering, for such events are conducive to great advantages, and from a social standpoint cannot be surpassed as a means of creating and keeping alive a spirit of good fellowship, with the interchange of ideas and mutual helpfulness.... Many and various were the items of sport provided for the young folk, who competed with all their inherent enthusiasm for the prizes offered, from the panic-stricken hen to the shining coin of the realm. The day's enjoyment concluded with a social in the schoolhouse.⁴⁰¹

For the more energetic, in 1898 the domain board repaired and widened the track to the top of Te Aroha mountain. 'A finger board will probably be erected showing travellers when to turn off in order to get water, or to go to the mines' close to the township.⁴⁰² Trips further afield also occurred; for instance, in 1898 the 110 residents who went on a special excursion train to Ngaruawahia for the Tainui regatta all 'enjoyed themselves immensely'.⁴⁰³

AN 1895 EXAMPLE OF A COUNTRY FETE INVOLVING THE WHOLE DISTRICT

When 'a garden fete in aid of the New Zealand Church Missionary Association' was held on a Shaftesbury farm in January 1895, the 'favourable weather enabled a large number of people to pay a visit to this justly-famed district'. Three coach proprietors provided transport, 'while private vehicles of every description took settlers from Te Aroha, Waihou, Waiorongomai, Morrinsville, and other parts of the district'.

Upon entering the grounds, it was found that every preparation had been made for the pleasure of the visitors, while the principal object of the fete had not been overlooked. A stall decorated with flowers, ferns, flags, etc, had been erected underneath the trees, and was well covered with a large assortment of useful and fancy goods, all marked at moderate prices. A beautifully ornamented refreshment stall had also been provided, which proved most attractive to all the visitors.

⁴⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 2 April 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁰² *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1898, p. 2.

The farmer's wife and daughters, in charge of the stalls,

were very attentive to the wants of those who sought to possess some of the beautiful articles exposed for sale. The visitors fully entered into the spirit of the promoters of the fete, and enjoyed themselves immensely, lawn tennis, cricket, rounders, Aunt Sally, etc, being enthusiastically indulged in during the afternoon, and general regret was expressed when the time came to return home. A good business was done during the day at the stalls, the proceeds of which, together with the entrance money, will make up a considerable sum for the Missionary Association.

The host and his family deserved 'every praise for the manner in which they, assisted by a few of the settlers around, have laboured to prepare for this fete, while they are to be congratulated upon the great success that has attended their efforts'.⁴⁰⁴

ENTERTAINMENTS PROVIDED BY RESIDENTS

Local people continued to create their own entertainment, usually to raise funds for worthy causes. In 1890, for instance, a lecture by the Wesleyan minister, 'Our First Fifty Years in New Zealand', to aid the library, had a 'disappointing' audience.⁴⁰⁵ Three months later, an entertainment for the same cause was a 'very great success', the bright moonlight night encouraging a full attendance. Over £10 was raised, which was considered 'very satisfactory ... especially considering the very dull times'. The evening commenced with a vocal and instrumental concert. 'After the usual interval, the one-act comedy entitled "My Turn Next" was performed in really first-class style by a number of local amateurs'.

The plot is based upon the home-coming of Twitters' [the apothecary] recently married wife, and the sudden change in his feelings towards her owing to information as to her antecedents which he received from Peggy [his housekeeper], Tom Trap [a commercial traveller], and Farmer Wheatear, who had respectively known her as Mrs Green, of Gloucester, Mrs White, of Warwick, and Mrs Black, of Banbury, whereas he (Twitters) had only known her as the widow of the late Mr Brown, of

⁴⁰⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 January 1895, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 9 April 1890, p. 2.

Bedford. At the commencement Tim Bolus [Twitters' assistant] tells Tom Trap that his master is "werry excitable and naterally narvious by natur; while as for '*spicious*, why, once 'e gets a hidea into 'is 'ed, there ain't never no gettin' it out agin'." As his informants all stated that the lady's former partners had "disappeared very mysteriously after eating mushroom ketchup," Twitters' suspicions as a chemist are aroused. Space will not allow of our following out the details. Suffice it to say that matters are eventually satisfactorily cleared up, but before that happy denouement is reached, there is a series of very laughable attempts on the part of Twitters to escape what he considers his impending doom. Dinner was served up in a very realistic manner - cold boiled fowl, potatoes, ale, etc, *including mushroom ketchup* - and the by-play between Twitters and Tim Bolus caused great amusement, the latter eagerly eating the viands and drinking the ale which his master passed him untasted thinking they were poisoned.

'All performed their parts admirably', but the actor playing Taxicum Twitters rose 'considerably above the ordinary amateur level, and verged closely to that of the "pro." Everything went off (including the blunderbuss) without a hitch, and the services of the prompter were fortunately not brought into requisition'. Afterwards, a dance was held until midnight. 'Everybody expressed themselves as being highly pleased with the entertainment'.⁴⁰⁶ Not so popular were spontaneous street performers: 'Who are those two young men that keep the people awake with the sweet music on the fiddles?'⁴⁰⁷

A variety of local talents were tapped on these occasions, as in the New Year's Night concert in 1892, when four women and one man provided 'such a musical treat that we shall not forget it in a hurry. Not the least enjoyable part of the evening's amusement was a final item', a recitation by a local poet, 'which was rendered with exquisite feeling'.⁴⁰⁸ Socials, concerts and, in particular, dances were always popular. In November 1890, 'the upper ten of Te Aroha' were 'about to discontinue their fortnightly socials in the hall', possibly because they were short of funds.⁴⁰⁹ In 1892 a social was held there every Wednesday evening.⁴¹⁰ In December that year, a concert and dance

⁴⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁷ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 29 August 1891, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁰⁸ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 16 January 1892, p. 18.

⁴⁰⁹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 22 November 1890, p. 17.

⁴¹⁰ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 16 July 1892, p. 19.

raised money to clear the recreation grounds on the western side of the river.⁴¹¹ Benefit concerts were held for those who suffered illness or accident: for instance, a 'grand concert' was arranged in July 1893 for a man who lost a leg in an accident. 'Every effort' was made to make it 'a great success, and no doubt a good sum will be obtained for this most deserving object'.⁴¹² Four months later the Town Hall 'was packed, and every item enthusiastically received' at a concert to raise money for the school. 'Many willing helpers' prepared and decorated the hall, which 'looked remarkably pretty'. There were songs and instrumental pieces, two tableaux, and a concluding farce performed by 11 locals. 'Each acted their part admirably, and, for amateurs', showed 'remarkable ability. After the farce was over the floor was cleared for dancing, which was continued for an hour or two'.⁴¹³ The popularity of such entertainments was indicated by an event in 1896:

It is not often an advance and retreat is almost simultaneous, but such was the case at Te Aroha on Monday evening. An entertainment was on at the Town Hall, and the door, belaboured by an impatient crowd, suddenly opened. There was an in-rush, a crash and an illumination; then the tide changed suddenly as a tidal wave ebbs and flows, and the crowd was in the street again. A lamp which fell and disturbed Parson Norrie's Band of Hope [temperance] meeting was the cause of it all.⁴¹⁴

The first Arbor Day, held in August 1892, included tree planting, speeches, and sports for the children plus an Anglican soiree and concert. 'More than 250 people partook of the good things which had been most liberally provided by the ladies of the congregation, and one and all voted it one of the best teas they had attended'. Due to the absence of two performers, 'the programme of the concert was not so good as had been anticipated'. Songs, instrumental pieces, and recitations were performed as per usual, but notable was 'an encore, "Minnie," a march composed by Herr Tutschka, of Auckland', which was 'very well received'.⁴¹⁵

A 'novel entertainment' consisting of a 'Christmas tree and forest fair' raised funds for the Wesleyan Church in 1894. The Town Hall was 'most

⁴¹¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 December 1892, p. 23.

⁴¹² Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 21 July 1893, p. 6.

⁴¹³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 November 1893, p. 22.

⁴¹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1896, p. 2.

⁴¹⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 August 1892, p. 37.

tastefully decorated with evergreens and flowers; the Christmas tree, covered with toys, being placed in the centre of the hall. A stall, laden with a large assortment of useful and fancy articles, ran the whole length of one side', and 'brisk business' was done at another 'well supplied with refreshments for the inner man'.

In the evening the hall was packed by people from all parts of the district, and presented a most animated and festive appearance. The brass band played choice selections of music both outside and inside of the hall, several solos were given by friends, and in the meantime a large amount of money was taken. Fishing ponds and other amusements were provided for the youngsters, and proved highly attractive.

The organizers were congratulated for bringing 'so many people' together 'in happy enjoyment'.⁴¹⁶ The second half of a concert held on Queen's Birthday in 1895 to raise funds for the school was a burlesque, 'Beauty and the Beast'.⁴¹⁷ Later that year, the first entertainment of the Waihou Junior Dramatic Club, assisted by some Te Aroha residents, was held to aid both the club and the school; it included a farce and a dance.⁴¹⁸ Late that year, a concert for St Mark's Anglican church consisted of an overture, 'Beauty's Queen', songs, violin and piano solos, a selection by the band, the tableau 'Excelsior' in five scenes, another tableau in three scenes entitled 'The Little Hero', the recitation 'Wreck on Mumble's Head', and concluded with the tableau 'Statuary' followed by the National Anthem. Unusually, there was no mention of a dance to follow.⁴¹⁹ It was a great success.⁴²⁰ Two weeks later, there was another concert and dance at Waihou.⁴²¹ Concerts held by the Volunteers were always popular; one held in 1898 was crowded, and the dancing that followed went on until two o'clock in the morning.⁴²²

⁴¹⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 26 December 1894, p. 6.

⁴¹⁷ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 18 May 1895, p. 2.

⁴¹⁸ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 7 August 1895, p. 2.

⁴¹⁹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

⁴²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1895, p. 2.

⁴²¹ *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1895, p. 2.

⁴²² *Te Aroha News*, 28 May 1898, p. 2.

Monthly socials were held during the winter of 1895.⁴²³ As well, important events in the lives of residents were marked by special socials. For example, in January 1898 all Te Aroha was invited to celebrate the wedding of a miner's eldest daughter; there was music and games, with members of the band providing music for dancing.⁴²⁴ In early March, at a social gathering to welcome a newly married couple back from their honeymoon, 30 couples participated in the grand march and dance. As well as songs, such games as Blind Man's Buff and A Jolly Miller were played, with supper being provided at midnight.⁴²⁵ At the end of that month, a social was held 'to mark the esteem' in which a departing milliner was held 'by her numerous friends'.⁴²⁶ Socials at nearby settlements continued to be attended by residents; in July 1898, for instant, a special coach left at seven in the evening for 'one of the popular socials' at Waihou.⁴²⁷

AN EXAMPLE OF AN ENTERTAINMENT BY LOCAL AMATEURS

In August 1897 the new Te Aroha Rifle Volunteer Minstrel and Comedy Company gave its first entertainment. Although popular with the audience, a reviewer noted defects, which may explain why it never gave another performance:

Although the night was wet, the hall was packed to the doors with an appreciative audience. The usual nigger minstrel business comprised the first part, a dozen members of the company (only partly blackened, by the way) in grotesque costumes forming a semi-circle, with Lieut. Whiteley in evening dress in the centre acting as interlocutor. The programme opened with the chorus, "Laugh and Grow Fat," which showed evident want of practice both as regards time and tune. A series of jokes and local gags were next given, and apparently amused the audience. The corner men were Volunteers Tonge and Buchan (tambos) and Volunteers Smardon and Devey (bones), but only one (Volunteer Tonge) of the four showed to any advantage, the others appearing nervous and out of their element. Volunteer A. Biggs, who gave with good effect an original recitation entitled "A dream of Te Aroha's future," would no doubt have done justice as

⁴²³ *Te Aroha News*, 30 October 1895, p. 2.

⁴²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 20 January 1898, p. 2.

⁴²⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 3 March 1898, p. 2.

⁴²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 31 March 1898, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Electoral Rolls*, 1896, p. 21; 1899, p. 41.

⁴²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1898, p. 2; see also 10 March 1898, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 2.

a corner man. Volunteer Buchan soared a little too high in choosing "White Wings" as his vocal contribution: a serio-comic song would have suited him much better. A second series of jokes followed: the Bugler Devey introduced his "Dinah" to the audience and receive due acknowledgement. "The miner's dream of home" was very nicely rendered by Lieut. Whiteley, the chorus being taken up with spirit by the company. More jokes, after which Volunteer Tonge gave the nigger song, "Dere goes Dandy Jim," in fine style, concluding each verse with a step dance, which called forth loud applause. In the absence of Lance-sergeant Elkington, Mr Gerald Shaw kindly volunteered his services and sang "Anchored" in a pleasing manner, an encore being demanded, when he gave "The camp fire watch," which was applauded. Volunteer E. Smardon gave a fair rendering of "The volunteer soldier." Lieut. Whitely apologised to the audience for having to omit the nigger farce from the programme owing to the unavoidable absence of the principal character. "Shakespeare's Seven Ages" was recited with fine effect by Mr J.A. Young (Hamilton). The second part of the programme was opened by a trio, "La Princesse" (violins and piano, nicely played by the Misses Stanley, who received well deserved applause. The amusing military farce, "The rival captains," was staged by members of the Hamilton Dramatic Club, the several parts being well played, and elicited the hearty acknowledgements of the audience. The following was the cast: - "Charlotte Doubtful" (an heiress), Miss N. Yeats; "Mr Heartley" (guardian to Charlotte), Mr A.T. Reid; "Captain Seymour" (madly in love with the heiress or her money), Mr G. Carr; "Captain Howard" (also similarly affected), Mr J.A. Young; "Trap" (servant to Captain Seymour), Mr J. Reid; "Trick" (servant to Captain Howard), Mr Mahon; "Clay" (a brickmaker), Mr A.E. Biggs. The singing of the National Anthem brought an enjoyable entertainment to a close. A dance was afterwards held, and kept up until 2 a.m.⁴²⁸

MUSIC

Music performed by locals and the occasional visitor was both an important part of social life and a good way of raising funds. As an example of the latter, to raise money for the Wesleyan church a Service of Song, 'Jessica's First Prayer', was performed at Te Aroha West with the participation of a Te Aroha choir.⁴²⁹ The attendance was 'not so large as it ought to have been, considering the meritorious character of the

⁴²⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 August 1897, p. 2.

⁴²⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 2 April 1890, p. 2.

performance'.⁴³⁰ As an example of the social role of music, the brass band played for the school treat in 1890, not only on the boat but throughout the day it 'added greatly to the enjoyment of the "outing" by most good naturedly remaining on the ground and playing at intervals'.⁴³¹ A small but hardy number of musicians provided music for dances, as when in May 1898 two violins and a piano played for the Volunteers' dance.⁴³² The *Te Aroha News* announced in 1895 that a singing class for children would meet a long felt want.⁴³³ Later in the decade, Ellen Louisa Featon, who had sung with an Auckland vocal group, settled in Te Aroha as a singing and dancing teacher.⁴³⁴ She was the daughter of John Featon, a journalist, historian, and mining investor at Waiorongomai and elsewhere.⁴³⁵ Other performers were much more amateurish: for instance, in 1891 the *Observer* Man asked, 'Who are those two young men that keep the people awake with the sweet music on the fiddles?'⁴³⁶

The most unmusical feature of musical life in the township was lambasted at the conclusion of an 1894 concert. A visiting tenor 'came before the curtain and said he had sung all over the world except America, and never had he sung to a piano three and a half notes down', which had forced him to sing baritone settings.⁴³⁷ The *Observer* confirmed that this piano, used for all concerts, was 'a fearful and wonderful contrivance', which the Paeroa newspaper described as 'a vile chest of discordancy'.⁴³⁸ Judging by the lack of complaints in later years, either a new one was purchased or locals provided their own pianos for concerts.

In June 1891, 'very great interest' was shown in forming a Musical Society, to run which 'a substantial committee' was selected.⁴³⁹ In August,

⁴³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1890, p. 2.

⁴³¹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 January 1890, p. 2.

⁴³² *Te Aroha News*, 28 May 1898, p. 2.

⁴³³ *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

⁴³⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1895, p. 2, 22 February 1900, p. 2; 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 2 November 1901, p. 26.

⁴³⁵ See Birth Certificate of Ellen Louisa Featon, 1872/4037, BDM; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 828; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 43, 64, 84, 202, 209, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴³⁶ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 29 August 1891, pp. 17-18.

⁴³⁷ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 29 December 1894, p. 22.

⁴³⁸ *Observer*, 5 January 1895, p. 11.

⁴³⁹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 20 June 1891, p. 17.

the Choral Society (the same society?) planned to hold concerts shortly.⁴⁴⁰ But in early October it was reported that ‘the wreck of the Musical Society took place the other week after a lingering existence’.⁴⁴¹ From the wreckage rose the Te Aroha Musical Society, which gave its first concert in mid-November.⁴⁴² This also collapsed, but in May 1897 a Musical and Dramatic Club was formed.⁴⁴³ Despite attracting only a small attendance to its inaugural meeting, it decided to hold monthly performances.⁴⁴⁴ The programme for the first performance indicated that its emphasis was dramatic rather than musical, for members put on ‘the risible provoking farce “A Conjugal Lesson” and the comedy “Checkmate” ’.⁴⁴⁵ This performance was ‘postponed until further notice’,⁴⁴⁶ marking the end of yet another cultural body. In October 1899 a ‘largely attended meeting’ decided to form another Te Aroha Musical Society. Honorary members would pay 10s 6d a year, entitling them to free admission; male ‘working members’ would pay an annual subscription of 5s, women paying half that amount.⁴⁴⁷ This commenced with brighter prospects, with 61 members practicing for a concert in early 1900 and more members joining.⁴⁴⁸

A correspondent asked, in mid-1891, ‘What has become of our once famous brass band? Has it died a natural death?’⁴⁴⁹ Seemingly it had, to be replaced next year by the band of the Te Aroha Rifle Volunteers. In November 1893 they were ‘still practicing. I wonder how they will shape when called upon to play in public? At present there is room for improvement’.⁴⁵⁰ In June 1894, when it attended the Volunteers’ parade under a new bandmaster, ‘the improvement in the playing was most marked’. That evening, it ‘performed in the domain, and the well-played

⁴⁴⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 August 1891, p. 17.

⁴⁴¹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 10 October 1891, p. 18.

⁴⁴² ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 21 November 1891, p. 17.

⁴⁴³ ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 May 1897, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁴ *Waikato Argus*, 11 May 1897, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 May 1897, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁶ ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 June 1897, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 October 1899, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1899, p. 23.

⁴⁴⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 24 March 1900, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 July 1891, p. 17.

⁴⁵⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 11 November 1893, p. 21.

pieces were very much enjoyed by those in the neighbourhood'.⁴⁵¹ Late that month, the chairman told a public meeting that after 'the services of an exceptionally good bandmaster' had been obtained 'the results of his efforts have been so satisfactory that many of the prominent citizens felt they would like to do something towards supporting him and making the band still more efficient'. It was agreed that settlers be canvassed either to become honorary members at £1 1s or to subscribe 10s 6d each year. The domain board would be asked to provide an annual grant 'on the understanding that the band gives an evening's music in the Domain each week'. As well, the publicans would be asked to give an annual subscription.⁴⁵² One week later, a correspondent commented: 'Our band improves daily. Quite time it did'.⁴⁵³ In November it accompanied the hymns at a Volunteers' church parade, the bandsmen deserving 'the greatest credit' for 'the nice manner in which they rendered the music'.⁴⁵⁴

It continued to play on special occasions, such as the children's picnic on New Year's Day in 1895. A report of the event stated that several members 'were away for the holidays, but the remaining members', assisted by three local musicians, 'played a large number of pieces during the day, and added very much to the general enjoyment'.⁴⁵⁵ Later that month, it played selections on the balcony of the Club Hotel, 'which seemed to liven up the township'.⁴⁵⁶ To raise funds, it continued to hold concerts and play in the domain.⁴⁵⁷ In March, the *Te Aroha News* quoted a correspondent who had stated that a concert 'was well attended. The Band folk wish they could say this was correct'.⁴⁵⁸ When an excursion train arrived in May, the domain board hired it to play for the visitors 'on their arrival' and it 'discoursed sweet music during the day'.⁴⁵⁹ Ten days later, it played very well at a school concert; 'the bandsmen have made great progress lately'.⁴⁶⁰ In July, as well as playing at a benefit concert for a sick farmer, a concert

⁴⁵¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 June 1894, p. 22.

⁴⁵² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 June 1894, p. 23.

⁴⁵³ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 7 July 1894, p. 21.

⁴⁵⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1894, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 January 1895, p. 9.

⁴⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 28 January 1895, p. 2, 2 February 1895, p. 2, 27 February 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 2 March 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 25 May 1895, p. 2.

for its instruments fund was attended by people from nearby settlements, it gave a sacred concert at Paeroa, and at the Volunteers' church parade it played a sacred piece during the offertory.⁴⁶¹ 'A picked Band' played at a fancy dress ball in August, and more concerts were performed at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai during the remainder of the year.⁴⁶² New marches, glees, and other music was acquired in October,⁴⁶³ and the following month 'the Brass Band selections were highly spoken of at the recent concert'.⁴⁶⁴ At the end of the year, it arranged to play in the domain one evening each week during 'the season' for ten shillings.⁴⁶⁵

Charles Henry Lawn, a mine manager at the Tui district,⁴⁶⁶ became bandmaster in late 1896.⁴⁶⁷ He resigned two months later, for good reasons:

You are probably aware that I have been intimately connected for some years with the conduct of brass bands on the West Coast, and latterly in the Auckland province. Before coming to Te Aroha I never had the slightest trouble to obtain fair average musters of bandsmen on practice nights. When I first came to reside in Te Aroha I found you had a band which lacked one essential - a conductor. I volunteered my services, which were accepted. I then got my brother [Frederick George Lawn] and a friend (both musicians) to join, and for a few nights things looked fairly promising. After a while, the absence of certain members became too pronounced, as it materially affected what is termed the balance of the band. The band contest then came on the tapis [came under consideration], and soon after the question of procuring a number of new instruments. The instruments I obtained from Auckland on my own responsibility, and for about three practices following their arrival the members of the Band took their accustomed places. Since then, however, a number of the members have displayed a total lack of interest in the band, and have neglected the practices. Although three of us have come down from the Tui for band practice regularly three nights a week, the local bandsmen have shown a total disregard for any

⁴⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1895, p. 2, 13 July 1895, p. 2, 27 July 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁶² *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1895, p. 2, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 7 September 1895, p. 2, 19 October 1895, p. 2, 14 December 1895, p. 2, 29 December 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁵ Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1895, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 December 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁶ See paper on the Tui mines.

⁴⁶⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 October 1896, p. 2.

voluntary efforts put forth to further advancement. I did once hope to make a bid for one of the prizes at the forthcoming contest; but that has, of course, been completely knocked on the head. The non-attendance of members at the practices set down for Thursday and Saturday nights of last week, and again on the Sunday afternoon, so discouraged me that I felt compelled to hand in my resignation forthwith. It is my intention, if possible, to retain the new instruments and establish a band in connection with the Tui mine. I must tender my hearty thanks to all those members of Te Aroha Brass Band who stuck manfully to their posts throughout, and I also wish to thank the residents of Te Aroha who have so generously contributed towards the funds in aid of the Band Contest.⁴⁶⁸

The Tui miners did not form a band, for the fading of mining there soon dispersed them to other regions. As Lawn's resignation had the desired effect, it was retracted, and in the first band contest, in the domain in January, he won the cornet solo. Three bands participated, less than anticipated; the local band came last in its test piece.⁴⁶⁹ It gave the first performance of the 'Te Aroha' march, by C. Trussell,⁴⁷⁰ a New Zealand bandmaster who composed a considerable amount of music for brass band,⁴⁷¹ which was repeated in later programmes.⁴⁷² This contest was a 'memorable and miserable day', held 'in the midst of such a deluge of rain as it has seldom been our lot to see'.⁴⁷³ In March, the band played 'a select programme of sacred music' in the domain on Sunday afternoon, 'which was greatly appreciated by a large concourse of residents and visitors'.⁴⁷⁴

Lawn was bandmaster until late 1897 and cornet soloist until mid-1898.⁴⁷⁵ Popular with the bandsmen, when he returned from his honeymoon

⁴⁶⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 24 December 1896, p. 5.

⁴⁶⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1896, p. 2, 1 February 1897, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 February 1897, p. 2.

⁴⁷¹ For example, *Colonist*, 10 January 1900, p. 3; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 2 May 1903, p. 2; *Northern Advocate*, 11 March 1904, p. 2.

⁴⁷² For example, 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 August 1897, p. 3.

⁴⁷³ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 25 March 1897, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁵ For his being replaced by Dave Pearson as bandmaster by 1898, see *Te Aroha News*, 25 January 1898, p. 2; for examples of his solo playing, see *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 3 March 1897, p. 3, and *Te Aroha News*, 16 July 1898, p. 2.

in May 1897 they greeted him by playing music at the railway station.⁴⁷⁶ In March 1898, he was training ‘pupils attached to’ the band.⁴⁷⁷ After being appointed mine manager of the Komata Reefs Company in mid-1898, he settled there, along with, for a time, his bandsman brother.⁴⁷⁸ Upon his taking up his new post, the *Te Aroha News* cited him as an example of one whose services ‘were of a value that done into pounds shillings and pence would represent a very respectable sum indeed’. He had coached the band for ‘night after night’ before the 1897 contest with ‘a tireless personal devotion’ in order to place it ‘on a more equal footing with the other competitors’. As well, he had personally guaranteed the payment of the new instruments that had been ordered. ‘His departure was a serious blow’, but it said ‘much for the grit, determination and ability’ of the bandsmen that they were ‘able to maintain so firm a front in the face of such a loss and such a musically dull season’.⁴⁷⁹

Lawn’s departure did not mean the end of the band.⁴⁸⁰ For a time, the miners who had moved to Komata still participated in some performances; in March 1898, for example, when it played at the races, ‘all the Komata boys’ apart from Lawn had ‘arranged to be present’.⁴⁸¹ It was popular because of being willing to participate in picnics, and in gratitude for its assistance received some of the surplus money raised from the New Year’s Day Picnic in 1898.⁴⁸² Its secretary, cordial maker George Sherlock,⁴⁸³ took over the training of new players in 1898, and in March his six pupils gave a ‘distinctly promising’ concert in the domain, assisted by some bandsmen.⁴⁸⁴

The following month, a visitor provided a ‘handsome donation’ on condition that particular music was played on a Thursday night. ‘So pleased was the visitor with the band’s performance and ready acquiescence that he

⁴⁷⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 May 1897, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 August 1898, p. 4; *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1896, Supplement D*, p. 3; *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1899, Supplement No. 1*, p. 9; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 February 1897, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 17 January 1961, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁰ For the replacement bandmaster, see *Te Aroha News*, 25 January 1898, p. 2, 3 May 1898, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1896, Supplementary Roll C*, p. 16.

⁴⁸¹ *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 1 February 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁸³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 830.

⁴⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1898, p. 2.

insisted on their repeating the programme in front of his hotel. The band funds ... were after that swelled by a further gift'.⁴⁸⁵ Three nights later a 'well-known Auckland man', perhaps the same visitor, got them to play at the Family Hotel.⁴⁸⁶ Encouraged by this popularity, the band, now independent of the Volunteers, decided to purchase uniforms.⁴⁸⁷ The *Te Aroha News*, noting that it was an 'indispensable adjunct to a fashionable watering place', complained that it had never received any payment from the domain board, which claimed to lack the authority to provide this.

In common with other public institutions, supported, practically, by voluntary contributions, the career of the Te Aroha Brass Band has been attended by the usual ups and downs, and it is with pleasure we note that at the present moment it has arrived at the happy stage of being able to present the public with a most satisfactory balance-sheet. Few of us are aware of the amount of practice it takes to enable a band to get a respectable *repertoire* together or the business involved and the expenditure of energy, tact and perseverance required of those who, out of pure love of the thing, give their services gratuitously.

The formation of a borough council meant it would receive financial assistance and have a paid conductor. As 'present constituted' it was 'impossible to bring the band up to the necessary pitch of perfection. The standard of its playing must be raised, and that can only be effected with practice and the regular attendance at practices of both members and conductor'. £2 2s a week was 'not too much to offer' a good musician who would 'devote the greater portion of his time to the musical interests of the Borough by arranging concerts and daily performances during the season'. Players would quickly come forward not only through love of music but because of 'self-interest to have an opportunity of serving under the banner of a really accomplished man'.⁴⁸⁸ That same month, Frederick George Lawn called a meeting 'of ladies' to arrange a concert and dance to raise funds for the uniform fund.⁴⁸⁹ This function had the support of the *Te Aroha News*, which reported that 'a splendid array of talent' would participate.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 14 June 1898, p. 2, 7 July 1898, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1898, p. 2.

Those of our readers who are in touch with the various social movements marking the winter season of Te Aroha will have probably observed that a strong feeling exists in our midst in favor of assisting the local band to resume the position it formerly held among our local institutions. There is excellent material at hand to work upon, but the *esprit de corps* is deficient. The long pull and the strong pull and the pull boys together sort of feeling that should animate such association and without which they are a mere pulseless automaton is wanting.

Providing uniforms would provide this, and it thanked the bandmasters for their 'patient and unremitting attempts ... to foster the growth of a spirit of pride in their work and a due appreciation of its dignity'.⁴⁹¹ The concert was crowded, and uniforms were acquired.⁴⁹² By the end of the century, the council assisted by providing a practice room, lighting, and instruments, and paid the band £1 5s weekly for playing twice a week in the domain.⁴⁹³ However, it continued to suffer because, with 'little or no work here to keep men in the place', there were 'no musicians to draw upon'. Boys played in place of men, but when they began to be useful players they had to move elsewhere for work.⁴⁹⁴

DANCES

The *Observer* Man wrote, sarcastically, in July 1890 that 'it was quite a treat to see such a grand turn out at the Fancy Dress Carnival here last week (twelve couples)'.⁴⁹⁵ In October 1892, 'some of the Te Aroha young ladies' were making 'every preparation' for a successful Leap Year Ball.⁴⁹⁶ In June 1893, the public hall was crowded for a concert and dance organized by the Te Aroha Rifle Volunteers,⁴⁹⁷ and in November the 'jam tarts' were holding monthly dances in the courthouse.⁴⁹⁸ The following year, Queen's

⁴⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 16 July 1898, p. 2, 28 July 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1900, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁴ George Kenny (Resident Medical Officer, Te Aroha) to Acting Superintendent, Tourist Department, 6 April 1905, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1901/121/31, ANZ-W.

⁴⁹⁵ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 19 July 1890, p. 17.

⁴⁹⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 October 1892, p. 23.

⁴⁹⁷ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 10 June 1893, p. 21.

⁴⁹⁸ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 11 November 1893, p. 21.

Birthday was celebrated by a parade of the Volunteers followed by a ball arranged by the bachelors. 'There were about 35 couples present. The floor was in good order, and all enjoyed themselves, the dancing being kept up till four a.m.'⁴⁹⁹ The 'ladies of the township' responded with another ball later that month.⁵⁰⁰ Likewise in January 1895, a plain and fancy dress ball was 'well patronized' by about 30 couples, dancing lasting till daylight.⁵⁰¹ When a 'Grand Concert and Ball' was advertised in the following month to raise funds for the band, those interested were assured that not only would Te Aroha's 'best talent' participate but that the floor of Smardon's hall had been 'fitted up', making it excellent for dancing.⁵⁰² On the same night in March, dances were held in both the Town Hall and Smardon's hall.⁵⁰³ During that winter, dances were held fortnightly.⁵⁰⁴

Fancy dress balls were especially notable events. For instance, a 'picked band' provided music for the 'Grand Fancy Dress Ball' held at the end of August 1895.⁵⁰⁵ Pietro Faes'⁵⁰⁶ fancy dress carnival in October offered prizes for the best-dressed participants and the 'Best Original Character'.⁵⁰⁷ This 'long-looked for' occasion was held in connection with Faes' 'skating and dancing socials':

The weather was all that could be desired, and as a result quite a number came from Waiorongomai, Gordon Settlement, Waharoa, and Morrinsville, and, by the time the music struck up for the grand march, the hall was very comfortably filled - close on 50 couples being present. The hall was very tastefully decorated with flags, Chinese lanterns, etc. Numerous were the styles of dresses worn on the occasion; the fancy dresses intermixed with the plain during the various dances presented a pleasing appearance. Some

⁴⁹⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 June 1894, p. 22.

⁵⁰⁰ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 16 June 1894, p. 21.

⁵⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1895, p. 2, 30 January 1895, p. 2; 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 16 February 1895, p. 21.

⁵⁰² *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 13 March 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 27 July 1895, p. 21.

⁵⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ See *Thames Star*, 7 August 1882, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 6 October 1883, p. 1, 26 October 1889, p. 7, 12 June 1924, p. 5; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 12 November 1892, p. 10, 31 December 1896, p. 2, 30 January 1897, p. 4.

⁵⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 2 October 1895, p. 2.

of the ladies and gentlemen in fancy costume looked remarkably well, and displayed great taste in their get-up.

The prize for 'the best dressed lady' went to a woman 'who looked very well as a representative of the Captain Cook Brewery', and the woman who won second prize wore 'a very neat dress' called 'Games'. A man dressed as a French Count was judged the best dressed, second prize going to 'a Sailor attire'. The costumes worn by unmarried women were 'Emerald Isle Lass', 'Ladybird', 'May', 'Grandpapa's Darling', 'Ellen Terry', 'Nurse', 'Vivian Dare', 'Red White and Blue', and 'Schoolgirl', whilst a married woman came as 'Romp'. 'Some of the evening dresses worn looked exquisite, and showed that we have some stylish dressmakers in our midst'. Men's costumes, apart from those already mentioned, were very masculine: 'Thames Rifle Ranger', 'Man-o'-Warsman', 'Jockey', 'Huntsman', 'Hamilton Light Infantry', 'Te Aroha Rifles', 'Tennis Player', 'Jockey', 'Highlander', another sailor, and a clown, 'who acted it to perfection, and created no end of amusement'. The band's playing was satisfactory, and there was 'a capital M.C.' Refreshments, 'handed round by an army of waiters, were all that could be desired. The ball lasted till early morning, when those present wended their way homewards, expressing themselves well satisfied with the evening's amusement'.⁵⁰⁸

1897 saw a 'select dance' on Easter Monday,⁵⁰⁹ followed soon afterwards by a 'very select ball ... to which only the creme of Te Aroha's aristocracy was invited'.⁵¹⁰ Another select occasion was the annual Masonic banquet and ball.⁵¹¹ The one held in 1898 was described as 'the event of the year'.

For months past this function has been anxiously looked forward to by all lovers of the terpsichorean art, and considering the successful way in which these balls are carried out from year to year this is not to be wondered at. Very few failed to respond to the invitations sent out by the brotherhood, with the result that the spacious hall engaged for the occasion was filled to overflowing. The hall was tastefully decorated with flags, etc, in the most up-to-date style. With a good floor and excellent music those present could scarcely fail to enjoy themselves. About nine

⁵⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 5 October 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁹ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Waikato Argus*, 13 April 1897, p. 3.

⁵¹⁰ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 4 May 1897, p. 3.

⁵¹¹ For example, 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1897, p. 3.

o'clock the musicians struck up the grand march, in which close to eighty couples took part.... The programme of twenty-four dances, besides several extras played by several of the ladies present was gone through without a hitch, it being close on daylight ere the last chord of music was struck. The supper was provided in the best style possible at host P[atrack] O'Meagher's well-known Family Hotel, to which the guests were driven in carriages.⁵¹²

By that year, a dancing class was held every Wednesday night; membership was 2s 6d, with men paying a nightly admission of 1s but women being free.⁵¹³ During that year the Dorothy Quadrille Club held dances.⁵¹⁴

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

A highlight for 1891 was the first visit by a Governor, the cause of much speechifying. Lord Onslow planted an oak in the domain to celebrate the occasion, and it was announced that No. 2 drinking fountain would in future be known as the Governor Onslow Fountain⁵¹⁵ (a renaming that was ignored). The first Arbor Day held in New Zealand, in 1892, had a more lasting impact. A joint committee of the town board and school committee made the arrangements, and the day was celebrated with 'considerable enthusiasm', with 'a good number' of townspeople turning out to assist with the planting and to erect fences around the trees. James Mills, chairman of the school committee, instructed the school children on the importance of beautifying 'their native place'.⁵¹⁶

VISITING PERFORMERS

A variety of performers visited during the decade. In 1890, Wirth Bros' circus obtained 'a £100 house' by attracting a 'crowded audience'.⁵¹⁷ Eight years later, 'the arrival of Fitzgerald's Circus caused great excitement, and

⁵¹² 'Te Aroha', *New Zealand Graphic*, 24 September 1898, p. 411.

⁵¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 15 January 1898, p. 2.

⁵¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1898, p. 2, 8 March 1898, p. 2.

⁵¹⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 February 1891, p. 5.

⁵¹⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 August 1892, p. 37.

⁵¹⁷ *Thames Star*, 3 September 1890, p. 2; 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 6 September 1890, p. 17.

was greatly appreciated by old and young'.⁵¹⁸ Visiting singers usually attracted a good audience. In 1893, a famous black American troupe, the Fisk Jubilee Singers,⁵¹⁹ had a 'crowded house'.⁵²⁰ Two years later, Madame Shoesmith's Grand Concert Company, three singers and a 'wonderful Child Violinist', performed.⁵²¹ Later that year, a 'popular baritone' announced his return visit, along with a 'popular vocalist and character artist': he promised music, mirth, dances, song and story.⁵²² Shortly afterwards, there was a concert by John Fuller, 'Auckland's Premier Tenor, and talented Family, also Miss E.L. Featon, the favorite Contralto'.⁵²³ (As noted, the latter would settle in Te Aroha and teach music and dance.) Three years later, a child mimic gave 'laughable imitations of great singers and actors', along with her father, a 'musical expert', and her mother, who played 'the funniest of sketches'.⁵²⁴

Visiting comedians were always popular. A complete list cannot be made owing to the loss of most of the local newspaper. The Chips and Comedy Company performed in 1890.⁵²⁵ In 1895, the Kennedy Dramatic Company gave a performance at 'Popular Prices'. J.J. Kennedy's forte was Irish comedy: on his previous visit he had presented 'Con the Shauqhron' to a 'large audience', and in 1895 he performed 'O'Callaghan on his Last Legs'.⁵²⁶

In November 1893 one entertainer amazed a local correspondent:

On Saturday evening the American salesman gave an entertainment in the public hall here, which must have been very entertaining, indeed - to himself. He induced the public to part with an amazing amount of money, and it is a question as to whether they now realise that they have received value for their coin. The American must have learned well the art of squeezing the money out, for it is said that some very "hard nails" gave up

⁵¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1898, p. 3; 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 14 May 1898, p. 21.

⁵¹⁹ See paper on black Americans and Te Aroha mining.

⁵²⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 January 1893, p. 23.

⁵²¹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2.

⁵²² *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 23 November 1895, p. 2, 14 December 1895, p. 2.

⁵²³ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1895, p. 2.

⁵²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 22 February 1898, p. 2.

⁵²⁵ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 22 November 1890, p. 17.

⁵²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

their pound notes. Most likely the butchers and bakers will have cause to regret this gentleman's visit.⁵²⁷

When the annual horse races were held in 1895, Miss Amy Vaughan's Amazons gave one of their 'popular entertainments'.⁵²⁸ A month later, a former member of the Victorian parliament gave 'his most Amusing and Instructive Lecture' on his parliamentary experiences. He promised 'Feasts of Laughter' in subsequent lectures on Mormons, parliament, and American humour.⁵²⁹ May brought a 'grand panorama of the world', presumably a magic lantern show.⁵³⁰ An advertisement in July told of

The Latest Sensation, PROFESSOR W.A. DAVIS' Fantastique, Embracing the most startling revaluations⁵³¹ of Modern Days in PSYCHOLOGY AND THE OCCULT ART OF SPIRIT RAISING. The Most Novel, Complete, Refined, and Amusing Entertainment of the kind extant. A NUMBER OF NOVEL AND SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTS.⁵³²

Ill health prevented his show being held.⁵³³ Instead, the disappointed could observe Captain Fisher, 'the most wonderful tattooed man in the world', who, after being captured by Mexican Indians, had over 500 designs drawn on his body; as well, ancient and modern magic was performed.⁵³⁴ In October, an advertisement headed 'Big. Black. Boom!!!' announced that the Ohinemuri Minstrel Troupe would give an entertainment that included a 'wild hilarious farce' entitled 'Killed with Kindness', along with 'Muldoon Guards' and a dance.⁵³⁵ 'Owing no doubt to the numerous entertainments, etc, which have been held here lately, the attendance was not as large as the excellent programme warranted'.⁵³⁶ At the end of the year, a 'Concert

⁵²⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 November 1893, p. 23.

⁵²⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 9 March 1895, p. 2.

⁵²⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 30 March 1895, p. 2, advertisement, 3 April 1895, p. 2.

⁵³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 18 May 1895, p. 2.

⁵³¹ As printed; should this be 'revelations'?

⁵³² Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1895, p. 3.

⁵³³ *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1895, p. 2.

⁵³⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1895, p. 2.

⁵³⁵ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1895, p. 3.

⁵³⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1895, p. 2.

and Variety Entertainment' was provided by 'Auckland's leading talent',⁵³⁷ who were given free publicity by the *Te Aroha News*:

Te Aroha has been favoured with a visit from an original and unique entertainer, in the person of Mons De Croix, the well-known and famous wire walker, contortionist, juggler, etc. Besides being an expert in the above, Mons De Croix is an artist of no mean order. During the afternoons of Monday and Tuesday he sold by auction various works of Art, of his own production. Several prizes were given for competitions and won by different ladies. The guessing competition attracted most attention. A pickle bottle was filled with nails and the fun was to guess the correct number. About 250 people guessed.... A beautiful oil painting was given to the successful competitor. The evening entertainment was unique in its way, the performance on the slack wire being exceedingly clever.⁵³⁸

Technologically advanced entertainments had arrived by the end of the decade with 'Mr P.R. Dix's Jubilee Kinematograph Myriodema and Concert Company' providing 'Living Pictures' of the British army and navy, horse races, and other scenes, along with two singers and 'Mr Dix's Funny Folks'.⁵³⁹

CONCLUSION, COMMENCING WITH AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY

A phenomenon seen on the evening of 22 January 1898 was described under the headline 'A Te Aroha Mystery':

Late on Saturday night while smoking a pipe in the seclusion of a balcony which overlooks the Domain, and by daylight commands perhaps as delightful a landscape as a love of such things could wish for - especially towards sunset - my eye was caught by a dazzling light within a handbreadth, according to the perspective in which it was viewed, of the summit of the Bald Spur. A heavy local shower was falling at the time and the inky black outline of the mountain silhouetted against the wild sky was barely discernible. At first I deemed myself the victim of a hallucination. Closing my eyes I counted twelve. Sure enough when I re-opened them the light had disappeared. Imagine my consternation when a moment later the light reappeared, shining with greater

⁵³⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1895, p. 2.

⁵³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1895, p. 2.

⁵³⁹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 3 March 1898, p. 2.

brilliancy than ever. While one might count a hundred, the unearthly glow swung to and fro with so long a pendulous sweep as to convey to the spectator the impression that the bearer was a being of gigantic proportions. Nearer and nearer the summit the ghostly visitant drew until at last the light became stationary. At that moment there came a lull in the storm and a solemn expectant hush fell like a mantle upon nature. Then a strange thing happened, the light which had so long remained fixed became violently agitated as if shaken in the convulsive grasp of a giant, and clear and shrill, through the silence of the night, came a skirl of such unearthly import as to freeze the marrow in our bones. When we looked again the light had disappeared. I may add I was not the only person who saw the strange light on the hill on Saturday night.⁵⁴⁰

Reports of this phenomenon would have caused considerable excitement in a township not noted for excitement, most of its activities being noted for their politeness rather than excess. The *Observer*, in an unkind comment about both Te Aroha and Nelson, claimed that it ‘had the reputation of being a sort of North Island Sleepy Hollow, and runs Nelson pretty close for the palm of being the home of “that tired feeling”’.⁵⁴¹ Some residents did their best to make living in the growing township more interesting and enjoyable, and for those of a mind to get out of their daily rut there was a wide variety of respectable opportunities. Less respectable diversions are examined in the paper on private lives.

Appendix

Figure 1: ‘Te Aroha, circa 1920’, mapped by Max Oulton, University of Waikato; published in Waitangi Tribunal, *The Hauraki Report: Wai 686* (Wellington, 2006), vol. 3, p. 922; used with permission.

Figure 2: View of Te Aroha, c. 1890, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

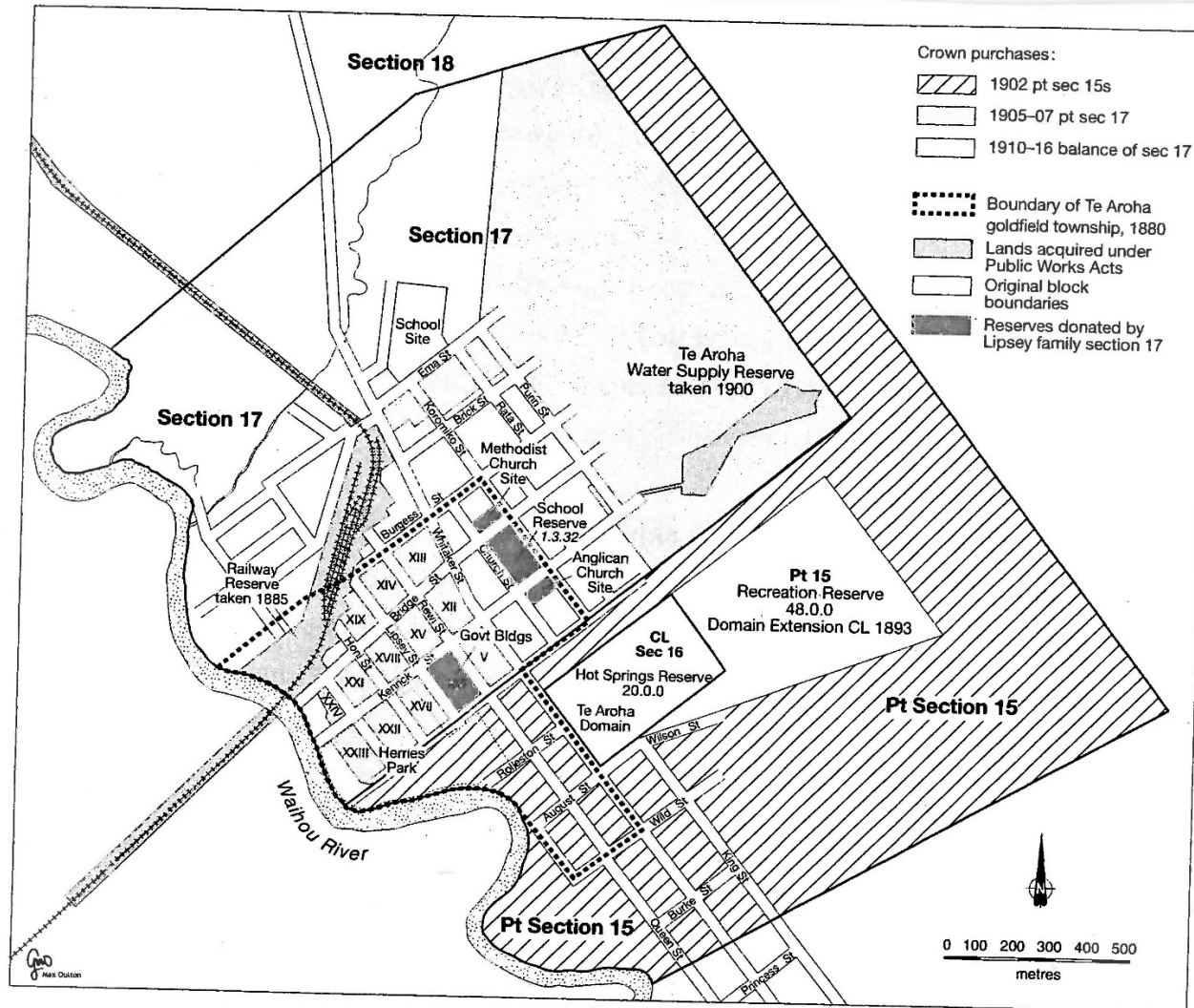
Figure 3: ‘Whitaker Street’, 1890s, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

⁵⁴⁰ A Correspondent, ‘A Te Aroha Mystery’, *Te Aroha News*, 25 January 1898, p. 3.

⁵⁴¹ *Observer*, 3 February 1900, p. 15.

Figure 4: James D. Richardson, Portion of Whitaker Street, 1895, 4-9145, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

Figure 5: Daniel Manders Beere, 'Te Aroha, Main Street' [Whitaker Street], 1895, 1/4-034388-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand: <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22531655>.



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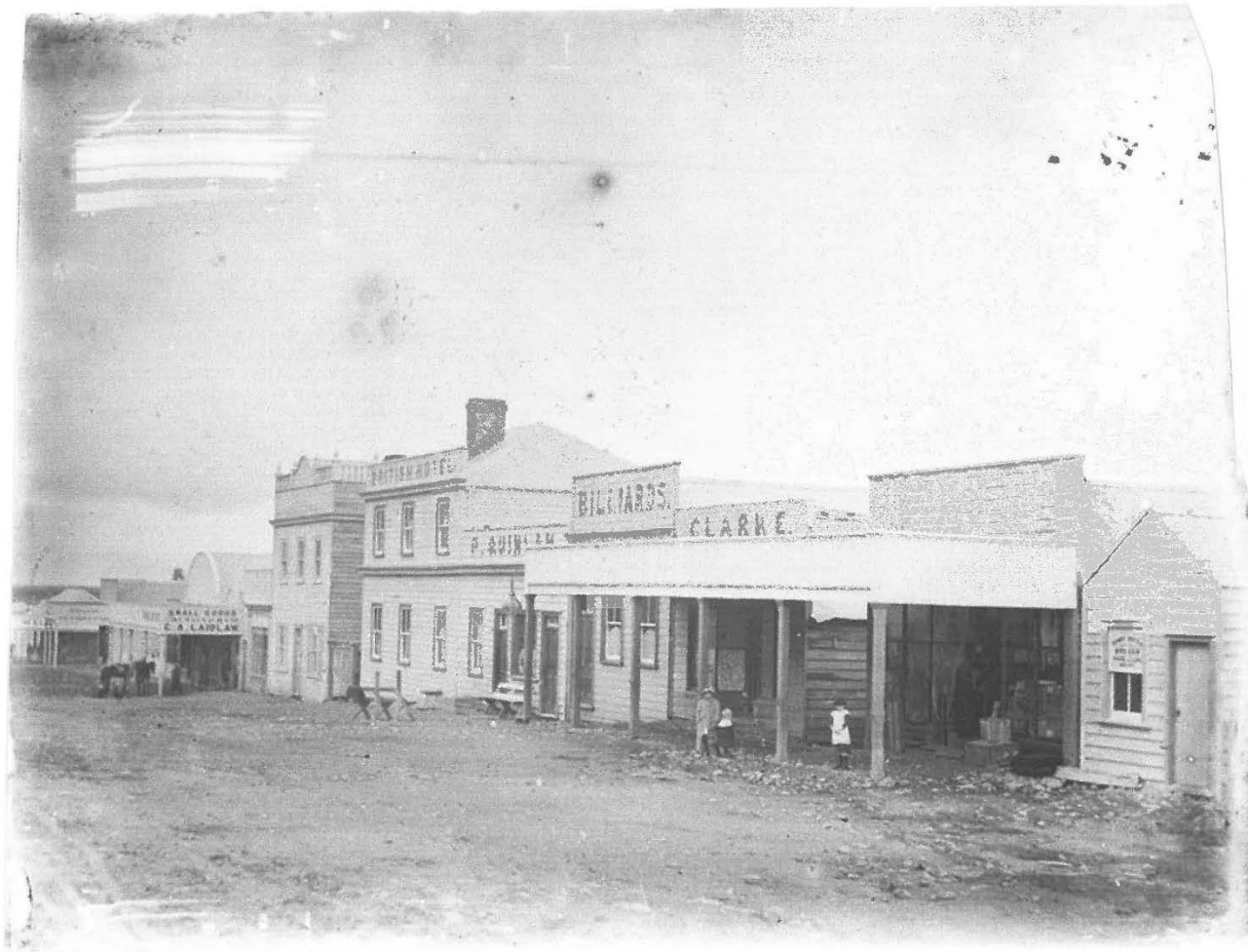


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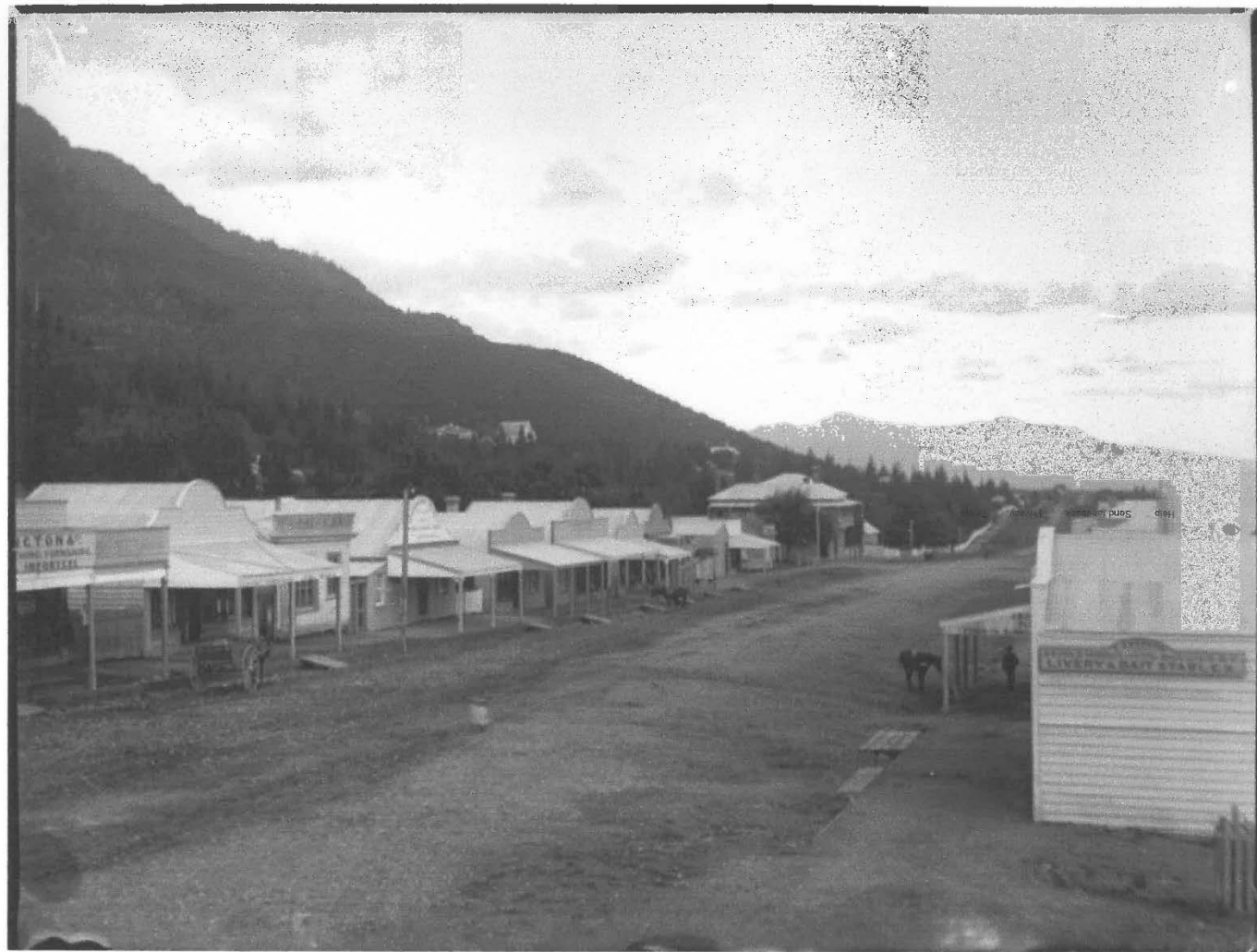


Figure 5: Daniel Manders Beere, 'Te Aroha, Main Street' [Whitaker Street], 1895, 1/4-034388-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand: <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22531655>.